

## Social Construction of Gender Roles and Women's Poverty in African Societies: the Case of the Nigerian Woman

Taiwo Ajala<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

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In Nigeria, societal perception of women as naturally unequal with men gave rise to arbitrary social construction of gender roles between men and women, in which men come first in the scheme of things. Men dominate the economic sphere and political positions of decision making while the role for women is believed to be in the domestic front, consisting mainly of menial endeavours that do not yield economic and political empowerment. The result of gender discrimination is therefore the unequal distribution of wealth in favour of men, hence the prevalence of women's poverty in Nigeria. The hypothesis of the study is that women's poverty in Nigeria is caused by traditional beliefs, cultural norms and customary practices which underlie the social construction of discriminatory gender roles. The study adopted a qualitative research method informed by a social constructivist paradigm. The study confirmed the hypothesis that gender discrimination is not the root cause of women poverty in Nigeria but existing traditional beliefs, cultural and customary practices in Nigerian communities. Consequently, efforts towards addressing women's poverty in Nigeria must be re-focused on eradicating existing traditional beliefs, cultural norms and customary practices which are responsible for gender discrimination and inequality in Nigeria.

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**Keywords:** Gender role, gender discrimination, discriminatory beliefs, discriminatory practices, women's poverty in Nigeria

Discrimination against women in various forms has continued to exist in African societies like Nigeria, in spite of global and regional efforts at ensuring gender equality between men and women. For example, the United Nations declared 1975–85 as Women's Development Decade and in 1979 adopted the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Other international and regional conferences on equal opportunity for women were held in Copenhagen in 1980 and Nairobi in 1985. The Beijing Platform for Action, concluded in 1995, served as international guideline for improving the status of women (Ebeku 2004).

In 2009, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference advocated social security as a means of protecting the weak and vulnerable, who were deemed to be mostly women and children, particularly in developing economies like Nigeria (Agatarn 2014). And all through the years, the World Bank and the United Nations have engaged in various research efforts and published many reports on the ways and approach to eliminate gender inequality and promote the status of women (UN 2010, 2015; World Bank 2010, 2016).

At continental level, the Rights of Women in Africa was adopted in July, 2003 as a supplementary Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Right of 1981. With specific words, the provisions of the Protocol cover the protection and empowerment of women far more than those of the main Charter (Ebeku 2004).

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<sup>1</sup> Ph.D (Leeds), Faculty of Law, Lagos State University, Lagos, Nigeria.

But Beneria (1995) and Kabeer (1999) have noted that in terms of social status, political and economic empowerment, women in civilized countries are in a better position than their counterparts in developing countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In developed countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States of America, gender discriminatory laws and practices have been abrogated and studies now indicate a fading gender line (Kabeer 1999; World Bank 2016). However, the situation remains different in developing countries like Nigeria. In one report, of the 134 countries ranked, Nigeria was placed in the 118<sup>th</sup> position of countries with gender gap in key sectors of the nation (World Bank 2015). For example, Nigerian women are not adequately represented politically in terms of holding elective posts and political appointments. Women's representation in the Nigerian House of Representatives fell from 6% in 2011 to 5% in the April 2015 general election as against the African average of 19% (Akor 2015) presently, of the 109 Senatorial seats in the Nigerian upper legislature, only 8 are women while out of the 360 House of Representatives members, 14 are women. And there has never been an elected female Governor in any of the 36 states of Nigeria, or female President of Nigeria.

In Nigeria, societal perception of women as naturally unequal with men has given rise to the arbitrary social construction of gender roles between men and women, in which men come first in the scheme of things. Women are considered inferior to men in the aspects of marriage, property and inheritance rights (Amber 2012). Therefore, men have more entitlements in the household and the society, and more rights to the ownership and control of land, which is a major source and means of economic empowerment. Consequently, men dominate the economic sphere and political positions of decision making while the role for women is considered to be in the domestic front, consisting mainly of menial endeavours that do not yield political and economic empowerment. These inequitable gender roles have thus placed men far ahead of women in positions of economic and political power where vital decisions are made and the allocation of resources, material and non-material, are determined (Agarwal 1997).

The result is the unequal distribution of wealth between men and women. According to Deere and Doss (2006), the patterns of wealth ownership by gender suggest that women face greater constraints than men in accumulating and keeping economic assets. Ownership of economic assets such as land improves the lives of those who own and control them as studies have established positive relationships between asset ownership and reduced poverty (Ogwumike 1995; Oladeji and Abiola 1998; Quisumbing and Maluccio 1999). Evidence in relevant studies demonstrates that the outcomes of household decisions depend on who has more bargaining power within the household, and since bargaining power is often measured according to access to income or ownership of wealth, this suggests that the gender patterns of wealth ownership place women in a disadvantageous position (Meinzen-Dick, et al 1997; Pyle 2002; Doss 2006a; UN 2015). The extent to which women are able to accumulate economic assets prior to marriage is also limited by discriminatory practices such as dowry, inheritance patterns, and women's labour force participation (Antonopoulos and Floro 2005).

According to the study of Breza (2005), not only did Nigerian men bring more assets to the marriage, but during the marriage they continued to accumulate more wealth than women, and these differences were substantial, and the gender inequalities tended to persist over the life cycle. However, the economic status of households is more easily identifiable from the living conditions of women who have the task of managing the homes and caring for the children. And the condition of poor households is exacerbated by the inability of women to make meaningful material contributions due to the less economic productive roles that have been constructed for them by society. Households' poverty in itself further contributes to women's poverty because in terms of priority female children are discriminated against in the choice of education and skill acquisition training (Yingstrom 2002; Doss 2006a). Gender discrimination in property rights, particularly ownership and control of land, has therefore brought about a situation where poverty becomes more pervasive among Nigerian women's population, as it is the case in most African societies (Aigbokhan 1998). For example, using the World Bank poverty measurement standard of \$1 US per day, about 1.4 billion people are estimated to live in extreme poverty worldwide and more than 314 million are stated to be Africans (World Bank 2015). It has also been noted that the African continent is home to some 34 of the World's poorest countries and that 24 of the countries ranked lowest in human development index (UNDP 2015). In all of the relevant studies, the report has consistently been that there are more poor women than poor men in the world, particularly in the third world countries (World Bank 2010, 2015; UNDP 2015).

Nigeria, African most populous country, is estimated to have more than 50 per cent of her population living in poverty determined either by low income as specified by the World Bank or by low human development as specified by the United Nations Development Programme (Akor 2015). The 2015 report of the Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics indicated that about 70 per cent of Nigerians live below poverty line according to the World Bank's standard, and majority of the people, constituting about 49 percent, were women. Relevant literature therefore shows that poverty profile in Nigeria is higher among women (Breza 2005; Joel 2008; Ekensoye 2012; Modimi 2014; Yaduda 2015; Akor 2015). A plethora of studies like that of Gray and Kavne (1999), Deere and Doss (2006), Doss (2006a), Akpomuvie (2010), Modimi (2014) amongst others have established a close relationship between women's poverty and gender discrimination. Reports of global bodies like the World Bank and the United Nations have also shown that lack of equal opportunities for women makes them more vulnerable to poverty (World Bank 2015, 2016; UNDP 2015). The studies of Okojie, et'al (2010) and Ekensoye (2012) showed a historical account and analysis of women's poverty in Nigeria as mainly attributable to gender discrimination which results to the exclusion of women from mainstream economic endeavours—owning lands, large-scale agriculture and access to credit for business. From the relevant studies, gender discrimination against women deprives women of the ability to fulfil their natural potential in economic empowerment and socio-political mobility hence the prevalence of poverty among Nigerian women (Okojie, et'al 2010; Ekensoye 2012; Modimi 2014; Akor 2015). Consequently, efforts at reducing women's poverty in African countries like Nigeria and other third world countries have been largely concentrated on programmes and initiatives aimed at ensuring gender equality (Davies 2009; UNDP 2015; World Bank 2015, 2016).

However, the hypothesis of this study is that gender discrimination and inequality, which studies have showed result to women's poverty in Nigeria, has its roots in traditional beliefs, cultural norms, and customary practices. Gender is a socially constructed component that reflects a society's views regarding appropriate roles for men and women, and is only instigated by traditional beliefs, cultural norms and customary practices. The source of gender discrimination and inequality is therefore the traditional beliefs, cultural norms and customary practices which construct societal rights and entitlements in the form that denies women access to economic and political empowerment, hence women's poverty. In effect therefore, what accounts for women's poverty in Nigeria is traditional beliefs and cultural practices which underlay the social construction of unequal gender roles.

## **Method**

This study adopted a qualitative research method that facilitates the understanding of human conditions in a natural setting, gaining of insights into people's world view, actual experiences and lifestyles through interviews with selected respondents (Bryman 2001). The adopted research methodology was informed by a social constructivist paradigm through which the world of human experience is viewed and how reality is socially constructed (Krauss 2005). Therefore, in order to understand the social reality of women's poverty in Nigeria and its ultimate source, this study sought the views of participants, purposively selected, who shared their knowledge and experiences. This method helped to unveil the ways in which individuals in this particular group deal with the construction of the social reality with which they are confronted.

## **Participants**

Three focus groups of participants were used for the study. Participants were sampled from members of non-governmental and not-for-profit organizations whose common objective is the economic empowerment of poor women in Nigeria. Accordingly, participants in the focus groups consisted of poor Nigerian women without viable means of livelihood, those in private and public paid employment, and those who are entrepreneurs and in small businesses. These were; COWAN (Country Women Association of Nigeria) which comprised women living in poverty based on their inability to provide for all the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothing; the WIMBIZ (Women in Management and Business) consisting of female entrepreneurs and women in small businesses and; the BPW-In Nigeria (Business and Professional Women-In Nigeria) made up of female professionals in public, private and self employment.

The justification of these organizations as the sample site for this study finds support in the global trend of engaging these organizations in important socio-economic issues like understanding the source of women's poverty. For instance, in its recognition of the important role of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in efforts at reducing poverty, a UNDP-sponsored study has developed a guide for the methodological approaches that are most relevant for promoting CSO's role in participatory assessments and its empowerment (UNDP 2015). The first group, COWAN, had a structure where the women were constituted into ten number per group based on some common denominators such as the group of 'ten trusting ten' (COWAN 2015). The researcher therefore took advantage of this existing grouping in the composition of the focus groups. Accordingly, ten participants were also selected each from WIMBIZ and BPW-In Nigeria, making a total of 30 participants. The three focus groups were then labeled GA, GB and GC respectively. With the aid of a research interview guide the researcher obtained the responses of participants in each group concerning their actual experience, knowledge and views about their; (1) status in the household and society (2) level of education (3) standard of living (4) source and means of livelihood (5) reasons for economic status (6) business and occupational challenges (7) ownership of landed assets (8) rights and entitlements compared with men (9) political participation and (10) life's desires and expectations.

### Procedure

The interview questions to which the participants in the focus groups responded were constructed around major themes that were developed from the study's hypothesis and in light of the literature review. The table below shows these research themes and their sub-themes.

**Table I: Research Themes**

Themes	Sub-themes
Traditional Beliefs	Cultural norms, customary practices
Gender Discrimination	Unequal social, economic and political gender roles
Property Rights	Land ownership, entrepreneurial capacity, business opportunity
Women Empowerment	Economic and political participation, public decision-making offices, gender power imbalance
Gender Gap	Education, Business, employment, political and socio-economic exclusion
Women's Poverty	Customary matrimonial and inheritance rights, inequitable property rights

The above research themes constituted the patterns or directions through which participants' responses were linked to the interview questions. While the major themes provided the context within which the responses from participants were analyzed, the sub-themes were used to further refine the participants' views concerning the interview questions. The importance of identifying the themes was that the researcher was able to pick out the substance or relevant information from the semi-structured interview with participants as they recounted their knowledge and actual experiences in fielding answers to the interview questions. For example, in the table above traditional belief was identified as the major theme while cultural norms and customary practices were identified as sub-themes in the research data that related to how most traditional Nigerian communities regard the girl child and the place of women in the household in particular and in the society in general. Similarly, unequal social, economic and political gender roles were identified as sub-themes in the data on gender discrimination. Also in the research data, land ownership, entrepreneurial capacity and business opportunity for women were identified as sub-themes in the discussions on property rights.

Under women empowerment, issues such as economic and political participation of women, involvement of women in public decision-making offices and the power imbalance in favour of men were identified as sub-themes. The sub-themes identified under gender gap were education, business and employment opportunities including socio-economic exclusion. Customary matrimonial and inheritance rights and inequitable property rights were linked with women's poverty hence they were identified as its sub-themes. In the research data analysis, the direction of the responses from each participant concerning the themes was identified with each of the interview questions.

In other words, connections between the themes and sub-themes as identified in the responses of participants constituted the logical deductive method of arriving at the appropriate finding on the interview questions. In the analysis of the research data the NVivo10, qualitative data analysis computer software used in analyzing transcripts of research interviews was applied. Accordingly, the research interviews were transcribed and this software allowed the researcher to code relevant texts in the interview transcripts and retrieve the coded texts without pouring over an entire transcript. For example, after coding a large number of interview transcripts, the researcher was able to retrieve all the categories of texts to which a code was attached without going through the entire interview transcripts from which the texts were coded. In applying this software to the analysis of the research data, the transcripts of the interviews with participants in the focus groups were copied to the NVivo10 document where nodes or key words and phrases were created.

The key words and phrases were equivalent to the research themes and sub-themes such that connections between the themes or sub-themes and the interview questions were identified. In this way, the numbers of times all the participants in the three focus groups offered responses in relation to each of the research themes or sub-themes were easily and accurately counted. Thus, the meanings constructed out of the participants' responses concerning the themes and sub-themes were interpreted and compared with the interview questions which encompassed the study's hypothesis.

## Result

The table below shows the results from the research data analysis with the NVivo10 software application. What the table shows is a statistical summary of the participants' responses on the research themes which represent topical pieces of the interview questions.

**Table II: Analysis of Participants' Responses**

Major Research Themes	Total Number and Percentage of Participants' Responses in each Focus Group				
	GA	GB	GC	Total Number	Total Percentage
<b>Traditional Belief</b>	10	10	10	30	100
<b>Gender Discrimination</b>	10	10	10	30	100
<b>Property Rights</b>	10	9	10	29	96
<b>Women Empowerment</b>	10	8	9	27	90
<b>Gender Asset Gap</b>	10	9	9	28	93
<b>Women Poverty</b>	10	10	10	30	100

From the table, all the research participants of 30, constituting 100% of the responses, expressed their views concerning traditional belief, cultural norms, customary and religious practices and ultimately, gender discrimination. The result of the connection between these themes in the process of analyzing the participants' responses is that other themes and sub-themes such as gender discrimination and gender inequality in property rights, education, business and employment which contribute to women's poverty in Nigeria, all emanate from traditional beliefs, cultural norms and customary practices. In other words, gender role or the role believed by most traditional Nigerian communities to be naturally assigned to women is responsible for gender discrimination, gender inequality in land ownership, and entrepreneurial and business opportunities for Nigerian women. This is represented on the table by the 100% responses on the themes of gender discrimination and women's poverty.

In terms of the relationship between the themes of property rights and women empowerment, 96% and 90% of the responses constituted the views of the research participants respectively. That is, the percentages represent the views of the participants concerning the connection between property rights and women empowerment in terms of lack of women economic and political participation, involvement in public decision-making offices and the resultant power imbalance in favour of men.

As regards the relationship between gender gap as a reflection of gender inequality in education, business and employment opportunities, 28 of the research participants, constituting 93% of the responses, expressed their views. The 100% responses on women's poverty reflect the views of the research participants who believed that customary matrimonial and inheritance rights, and equitable property rights impaction women's poverty in Nigeria.

## Discussions

The hypothesis of this study is that the source of gender discrimination is the traditional beliefs, cultural norms and customary practices which consider men as superior to women, and this gives rise to the social construction of gender roles in which men are the decision-makers' for the household, and main actors in the economic and political space while women are relegated to the domestic front. This hypothesis is confirmed as the study finds that in most traditional Nigerian communities, the place of women is traditionally believed to be in the kitchen, and that right from birth, the girl child is regarded with inferiority in terms of future ability and potentials such that she is not given equal opportunity in education like the male child. It is this belief that leads to gender discrimination and inequality which placemen as the heads of the household and also confer on them the advantage of having more matrimonial, inheritance and property rights, including more educational and economic opportunities (Deere and Doss 2006; Amber 2012).

The result shows that most women in Nigeria do not have property rights and own lands due to the patrilineal right to land ownership in Nigerian communities into which female children are born. Indeed, the study of Yingstrom (2002) had pointed out that the place of women in African societies has been traditionally held to be in the kitchen hence they have been short-changed in land ownership, such that title to land can only be traced to men. According to the participants in this study, under the prevailing customs and traditions in most Nigerian communities, women do not have right to inherit landed property, or even to acquire landed property in their name. And most men do not allow or encourage their wives to acquire landed property even when their wives have the financial capabilities.

As recounted by all the participants, gender discrimination is caused by traditional beliefs which deprive women of inheritance rights. It is believed that a woman has no right to inherit property in her family of origin neither does she have such right in her matrimonial household. In some Nigerian communities, women are even shared as property to the male beneficiaries of her deceased husband. Also, women are believed to be no longer having a place in their family of origin when they attempt to return home upon the death of their husbands. In the view of one participant in GB, "every woman in Nigerian traditional societies is bound to experience discrimination in respect of family landed property either at the death of her father or husband because of what they believed as custom of our fore-fathers". And according to another participant in GC, "the discrimination against women in terms of property rights is part of our tradition that is gains women and we cannot challenge tradition."

As noted by Modimi (2014), even when the structures that enforce the subordination of the women folk are legally removed (like under section 42 of the Nigerian Constitution of 1999 that prohibits gender discrimination), the cultural beliefs remain and play a strong role in ensuring that gender discrimination persists. This study finds that no matter how highly educated a woman may be, she does not rise above the traditional beliefs and customary practices which subordinate women to men in Nigeria. The underlying beliefs in most Nigerian communities which seem to perpetuate gender discrimination in respect of property rights is that a female child actually belongs in her matrimonial household and not the family of origin. But in reality, according to the study data, when it comes to matrimonial landed property or economic assets of a deceased husband, the wife is considered as a stranger who does not have inheritance rights. The implication being that in terms of inheritance rights women are discriminated against both in their family of origin and their matrimonial households. This pattern of discrimination against women in property rights has well been noted to be a major factor in women's poverty in Nigeria. For instance, Breza(2005) argued that the pattern of women's poverty in Nigeria is mostly along the lines of gender based discrimination against women with respect to proprietary right to land.

This study finds that most women in Nigeria could have had more economic opportunities and fallen outside the poverty circle, but for the existence of traditional beliefs and cultural practices. For example, in terms of the perceived high standard of living of some Nigerian women in employment or in business as entrepreneurs, they still lack the opportunities men have towards wealth accumulation, strong economic and political power due to traditional beliefs and cultural practices. This has been noted by previous studies which showed that women are more vulnerable to poverty due to gender inequalities with respect to income distribution, access to credit, control of property and income earned through work, as well as gender bias in labour market and; that assignment of resources is usually biased by gender throughout homes, state and market institutions (Okojie, et'al 2010; Ekensioye 2012; Modimi 2014).

True to the hypothesis of this study therefore, traditional beliefs and customary practices generate gender inequality which produces and reproduces discriminatory realities that keep women and girls in disadvantaged position, socio-economic exclusion and pervasive poverty. For instance, the study shows that the lack of education contributes directly to women's low economic and social status, hence their poor standard of living. This finding confirms the assertions of various development writers and experts that the cultural gender bias against female education is responsible for the high level of illiteracy among women who eventually get married to low income men and therefore live in abject poverty since such women lack the capacity to contribute financially to their households' sustenance (Aigbokhan 1998; Doss 2006a).

The lack of education was found to be entirely due to gender discrimination consequent upon the traditional belief that a girl child does not deserve education since she would be eventually married off to another man. In other words, the education of the girl is traditionally believed to be a waste of resources or a loss to the family of origin of a girl child. Evidently, almost all professions in Nigeria are still male dominated due to discrimination against girl child education. For example, the involvement of Nigerian women in politics has remained grossly negligible when compared to men (Akor 2015). The findings show that gender discrimination is responsible for the very low level of women participation in Nigerian politics and that until recently it was traditionally believed that women had no place in politics or governance, their proper place being regarded as the kitchen. While the absence of women's property right results in poverty, it was found that the lack of education has strengthened the domineering position of men over women. Enduring male dominance and the inferior perception of women has been noted by Davies (2009) who pointed out that in spite of the various international and regional instruments on women's right, not much has fundamentally changed in favour of women.

Gender discrimination starts from the age of minor when the female children are not given the same freedom to exert their potentials like the male children according to cultural practices in most Nigerian communities. The study of Imodimi (2014) showed that most of the poor women in Nigeria today are not only illiterate but that they are also not trained in any trade such as tailoring, hairdressing and other skills that could have been a source of income and means of sustenance. Ability to start a viable business as the only option is also hampered by anti-women business environment. For instance, data for this study confirmed the difficulty of women to access loan to start business. Nigerian women experience extreme difficulty due to their culturally perceived inferior economic status with respect to accessing loan in mainstream commercial banks, and even in micro finance banks.

The greatest obstacle against loan accessibility by women generally is the lack of landed property to serve as collateral security which banks demand from loan applicants. Thus, there is higher number of women than men in small and retail business as it is easier for men to access loan to start or expand business. From the study's data, the reason for this is that it is easier for men to provide collateral security, either with personal or family landed property, to secure a loan from the bank. The discrimination women experience in business loan accessibility is also compounded by male dominated business environment where women are either openly discouraged from getting involved or are frustrated out of it. The difficulty Nigerian women experience in accessing loan for business in a male dominated society therefore limits their business opportunities and potentials, and their ability to rise above poverty. In terms of employment, the study's data show that women are at a disadvantageous position as most male employers would prefer male to female applicants especially because of the compulsory post-natal leave period that a female employee would be entitled to, in the event of delivery.

In some private organizations like banks, new female employees are made to sign an undertaking to the effect that they would not be pregnant for a number of years so as not to require post-natal leave. The implication is that such organizations could terminate the employment of a female employee that became pregnant shortly after being employed. Indeed, existing research survey of workplaces in Nigeria has confirmed that women are still far from gaining equality with men in terms of employment (Imodimi 2014). Discrimination against women in workplaces runs deep, and some professions in Nigeria like political governance and armed forces openly exclude women as not naturally fit to be involved. This study has therefore corroborated the findings in previous studies on the direct relationship between gender discrimination or inequality and women's poverty (Gray and Kavne 1999; Deere and Doss 2006; Doss 2006a; Akpomuvie 2010; Modimi 2014).

Although, the hypothesis of this study is confirmed that traditional beliefs, cultural norms and customary practices are the causes of women's poverty in Nigeria, rather than their effect or gender discrimination, the study is however limited by its scope. For example, while women's poverty in Nigeria cuts across urban and rural communities in the country, this study did not distinguish between rural and urban women's poverty. The phenomenon of poverty may differ in degree or severity between urban and rural areas. This difference has been noted by Ellis and Lipton (1996), and according to an IFAD Report (cited in Agatarn 2014) the absence of social services in rural areas may make people more vulnerable to poor health and prolonged illness than in urban areas where such services are available. Therefore, this study, conducted in the metropolis of Lagos, Nigeria, may not represent the true state of women's poverty in rural areas of Nigeria, or the difference in the degree or severity of women's poverty between rural and urban areas.

However, this limitation does not invalidate the study's outcome because the traditional beliefs and cultural practices which construct discriminatory gender roles and predispose women to poverty may exist to the same degree in both rural and urban areas of Nigeria. For example, where a rural woman may be deprived of access to arable farm land as a result of tradition or cultural practice, an urban woman may similarly be deprived of access to bank's credit or political position for the same reason. Consequently, this study may fairly represent the source of women's poverty in rural communities in Nigeria, like it has for women in urban areas like Lagos. However, future study is necessary in order to specifically examine the source and incidence of women's poverty in rural areas of Nigeria.

## Conclusion

This study confirms the hypothesis that gender discrimination or gender inequality is not the root cause of women's poverty in Nigeria. Gender discrimination or gender inequality in every sphere of Nigerian women's life originates from traditional beliefs and cultural practices in most communities which regard the female child as inferior to the male child. It is the belief that a female child is of less value to the family and community that manifests in all forms of gender discrimination which lead to unequal access to education and training of female children and the eventual difficulties women experience in gaining employment or setting up business. Traditional beliefs and cultural practices in Nigeria shape the social construction of gender roles which discriminate against women in the aspects of property rights thereby limiting women's capacity to create and accumulate wealth, and attain economic and political power, hence the prevalence of women's poverty in the country. Consequently, efforts towards addressing women's poverty in Nigeria must be re-focused on the eradication of existing traditional beliefs, cultural norms and customary practices which are responsible for gender discrimination and inequality in Nigeria.

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