

Unveiling Gender Dynamics: Exploring Historical and Contemporary Manifestations of Gender Discrimination in Societal Structures and Policies

Segun Ayotunde Olulowo, Department of Religious Studies, University of Lagos. Email: segunolulowo@gmail.com

Solomon Taiwo Babawale, Religious Studies Department, University of Lagos. Email: taiwobabawale@yahoo.com

Emilius Olabode Aina, Department of Christian Theology, National Open University of Nigeria. Email: aina_bode@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study explores gender discrimination by examining its historical roots and modern-day expressions, particularly in ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria. Using a mixed-methods approach, it integrates qualitative analysis of biblical texts (Numbers 1–11) and historical commentaries to identify gender-specific roles in ancient Israel, alongside interviews and literature reviews to explore patterns of discrimination in Nigeria. Surveys among pastors, leaders, and church workers in Lagos State helped quantify the prevalence and impact of gender bias. Lagos was chosen for its multicultural setting, which mirrors broader gender issues in Nigeria. The research is grounded in Marxist feminist theory and production and property relations theory, providing frameworks to analyse systemic inequalities. Empirical findings highlight persistent gender disparities across sectors such as education, employment, healthcare, and political representation. The comparative analysis reveals both enduring similarities and evolving differences in gender dynamics between the two societies. Seven core recommendations are made to tackle gender discrimination. These include reforming discriminatory policies, strengthening institutional accountability, and launching awareness campaigns to promote equality and inclusivity. The study emphasizes the need to dismantle patriarchal ideologies embedded in societal structures. By revealing the historical and contemporary forces behind gender inequality, the study contributes valuable insights for social justice advocacy, gender-sensitive policymaking, and the pursuit of equitable societal development.

Keywords: *gender discrimination, gender dynamics, societal structures, patriarchal ideologies, policies.*

1. Introduction

Gender discrimination within ancient Israel, as depicted in the Book of Numbers chapters 1-11, reflects societal norms and practices that favoured men over women. One striking example is found in Numbers 5:11-31, where scholars argue that the law regarding a jealous husband and his wife places a disproportionate burden on women, implying a gender bias within the legal system (Matthews, Chavalas, & Walton, 2000). In these narratives, only male individuals aged twenty years and above are considered in census-taking processes, overlooking the broader contributions of women and children (Numbers 1:1-3). Despite prophetic verses suggesting a future scenario where women outnumber men (Isaiah 4:1), the exclusion of women from decision-making reflects a systemic issue.

Further, regulations concerning Nazirites in Numbers 6:1-21 subtly differentiate between male and female obligations, indicating a gendered aspect to religious practices (Knohl, 2007). Similarly, the absence of female leaders participating in offerings in Numbers 7:1-89 underscores the patriarchal structure of ancient Israelite society (Levine, 2000). Scholarly works by Ackerman (2005) and Meyers (2012) further illuminate the marginalization of women in familial and religious roles, reinforcing the presence of gender discrimination within ancient Israel.

In Numbers 3:11-12, male Levites are designated for specific roles, overlooking females, perpetuating gender bias in religious duties and leadership positions. Legal provisions within the Hebrew Law, such as those regarding marital fidelity, predominantly favor husbands, reflecting inherent gender inequality (Numbers 5:12-16). Nonetheless, instances like the Nazarene vow in Numbers 6:1-7 hint at a recognition of spiritual equality. In contemporary contexts, initiatives like the Millennium Development Goals underscore the imperative of promoting gender equality and empowering women (United Nations, 2000). Although the attainment of these goals warrants further scrutiny, the discourse surrounding the empowerment of women signifies a crucial step towards inclusivity and equitable societal progress.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

In ancient Israel and other parts of the world, including Nigeria, women face significant discrimination, often being viewed as inferior and sidelined in national and economic development efforts. The researcher contends that disregarding women's contributions hampers societal advancement, given their substantial portion of the population. To address this, women must be empowered to participate fully in all sectors of the economy. This study aims to explore how both the Church and government can serve as instruments for mitigating gender discrimination and promoting national development. By examining strategies to amplify women's roles, this research seeks to pave the way for more inclusive and equitable societies.

1.2. Research Questions

1. What are the natures of discrimination against women in the ancient Israel and in Nigeria?
2. What are the consequences of discrimination against women?

1.3. Definitions

Patriarchal Ideologies: social systems prioritizing male dominance.

Gender Disparities: differences in treatment based on gender.

Socio-Cultural Norms: shared societal expectations and behaviours.

Gender discrimination: bias based on gender, denying rights or opportunities.

Gender dynamics: shifting interactions and roles between genders over time.

Discrimination: unfair treatment or prejudice against individuals or groups.

Societal structures: frameworks shaping social organization and interactions.

Policies: official rules or guidelines governing actions or behaviours.

1.4. Theoretical Frameworks

Marxist feminist Theory: Marxist feminism examines the intersection of class and gender oppression. Marxist feminists argue that capitalism perpetuates gender discrimination by exploiting women's labour and reinforcing patriarchal structures (Hartmann, 1981). Another relevant theory is standpoint feminism, which emphasizes the importance of considering marginalized groups' perspectives to understand social phenomena (Harding, 1991). Standpoint feminists argue that women's experiences provide unique insights into power dynamics and societal inequalities, challenging dominant narratives constructed by privileged groups.

Production and Property Relations Theory: socialist theories, particularly Marxism, attribute social inequalities, including those faced by women, to material inequality stemming from private ownership of production means (Engels, 1884). They propose that eliminating or greatly reducing material inequality can lead to the eradication of most social hierarchies. According to Marxism, the revolutionary proletariat's expropriation of privately owned means of production and their communal administration will eliminate inequalities for the benefit of all members of society (Marx & Engels, 1848).

1.5. Limitations of the Study

1. The study focused on gender discrimination in ancient Israel (Numbers Chapters 1-11) and contemporary Nigeria, potentially overlooking nuances in other historical periods and geographical regions.
2. Limited availability of historical records and empirical data may have constrained the depth of analysis, particularly regarding ancient Israel.
3. The study may not fully capture the diverse cultural, social, and religious factors influencing gender dynamics in both contexts due to the broad scope and generalizations.
4. There is a possibility of bias in interpreting historical texts and cultural practices, impacting the accuracy of conclusions drawn.
5. Time constraints may have limited the ability to conduct more extensive fieldwork or qualitative interviews, potentially restricting the depth of insights gained.

1.6. Delimitations of the Study

1. The study deliberately focused on ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria to provide a comparative analysis of gender discrimination within specific historical and geographical contexts.
2. The study primarily examined gender discrimination as manifested in societal structures and policies, rather than individual experiences or interpersonal interactions.
3. By exploring gender dynamics across historical epochs and contemporary settings, the study aimed to offer a comprehensive understanding of how gender discrimination evolves over time.
4. The study integrated perspectives from history, sociology, and gender studies to provide a holistic analysis of gender dynamics, acknowledging the multidimensional nature of the phenomenon.
5. Policy Implications: The study aimed to inform policy interventions and advocacy efforts by highlighting the persisting challenges of gender discrimination and proposing recommendations for promoting gender equality in societal structures and policies.

2. Review of Literature

Gender discrimination is deeply rooted in societal norms and practices, manifesting in both ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria. In ancient Israel, patriarchal structures and religious traditions relegated women to subordinate roles, limiting their participation in decision-making processes and denying them equal rights and opportunities (Ackerman, 2005; Meyers, 2012). Similarly, contemporary Nigeria grapples with systemic discrimination against women, evident in disparities in education, employment, and access to resources (Akanle, Adesina, & Nwaobiala, 2018). Cultural practices like early marriage and female genital mutilation further marginalize women and perpetuate gender-based violence (Awolola & Ilupeju, 2019).

Gender discrimination in ancient Israel finds archaeological support in various aspects of material culture and burial practices. Excavations of ancient tombs have revealed significant disparities in grave goods and burial locations between men and women (Ackerman, 2005). Men were often buried with more elaborate items, suggesting higher status and social standing, while women's graves contained fewer and less valuable goods (Ackerman, 2005). Additionally, inscriptions and reliefs depict men in prestigious roles such as rulers, warriors, and priests, while women are portrayed in domestic settings or subservient positions (Meyers, 2012). The absence of female names and titles in official records and legal documents further indicates their exclusion from public life and decision-making processes (Ackerman, 2005).

These archaeological findings provide tangible evidence of the gender disparities and discrimination prevalent in ancient Israel, corroborating biblical texts that also reflect similar social norms and hierarchies.

The consequences of gender discrimination are profound and multifaceted. In ancient Israel, marginalizing women limited their ability to contribute to societal development and hindered overall progress (Meyers, 2012). By excluding women from decision-making processes and denying them access to education and resources, ancient Israel missed out on the potential contributions of half its population (Meyers, 2012). In contemporary Nigeria, discrimination against women perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality, contributing to disparities in health, education, and economic opportunity (Akanle, Adesina, & Nwaobiala, 2018). Limited access to education and healthcare has negative impacts on women's health outcomes and perpetuates intergenerational poverty (United Nations, 2019). Additionally, gender-based violence and discrimination undermine women's safety and well-being, creating barriers to their full participation in society (Awolola, & Ilupeju, 2019).

The Church has the potential to serve as a powerful force for change in addressing gender discrimination. With its moral authority and widespread influence, the Church can challenge traditional norms and advocate for gender equality within religious teachings and practices (Casimir, Chukwuelobe & Ugwu, 2014). By promoting inclusive interpretations of religious texts and emphasizing the inherent dignity and equality of all individuals, the Church can contribute to shifting societal attitudes towards women (Casimir, Chukwuelobe & Ugwu, 2014). Additionally, the Church can play a vital role in providing support and resources for women affected by gender-based violence and discrimination (Ojo, 2018). Through initiatives such as gender-sensitive preaching, leadership training, and community outreach programs, the Church can empower women to assert their rights and advocate for gender equality.

Governments play a critical role in combating gender discrimination through legislative reforms, policy interventions, and institutional mechanisms. In Nigeria, enacting and enforcing laws that protect women's rights and promote gender equality are essential steps towards addressing systemic inequalities (Adesina & Onyishi, 2018). Additionally, implementing gender-sensitive policies in areas such as education, healthcare, and employment can help bridge gender gaps and promote women's empowerment (United Nations, 2019). Governments can also establish specialized agencies or task forces to monitor and address gender-based violence and discrimination (Kore-Okiti, 2024). Furthermore, investing in programs that promote women's economic empowerment and political participation is crucial for advancing gender equality and fostering societal development (Ojo, 2018).

Gender discrimination remains pervasive in Nigeria across various domains, despite legislative efforts to promote gender equality. Scholars highlight the stark underrepresentation of women in Nigerian politics as indicative of systemic discrimination (Oyewumi, 2003). This phenomenon, attributed to entrenched patriarchal structures, significantly limits women's access to leadership roles and decision-making positions. Economically, women face disparities in employment opportunities and wages (Akanji, 2018). Women encounter significant barriers to formal employment and often face segregation into lower-paying sectors. Moreover, gender discrimination is prevalent in Nigeria's education system, particularly affecting girls' access to schooling (Nakpodia & Urien, 2012). This study examines gender discrimination in Nigeria's educational system, highlighting societal biases

that limit girls' access to education. The authors discuss the cultural belief that women's place is in the kitchen, leading to the perception that girls do not need formal education. Gender discrimination persists as a complex and multifaceted issue in both ancient and contemporary societies. Addressing this challenge requires concerted efforts from governments, religious institutions, and civil society to dismantle patriarchal norms, promote women's empowerment, and foster inclusive and equitable societies. Only through collective action and commitment to gender equality can societies realize their full potential and ensure the well-being and dignity of all individuals, regardless of gender.

The synthesis of gender awareness within religious and political spheres represents a dynamic convergence of principles, actions, and initiatives aimed at addressing gender inequalities comprehensively. Religious teachings, rooted in moral principles and spiritual values, provide a foundation for advocating gender equality and social justice. For instance, religious texts often emphasize the inherent dignity and equality of all individuals, regardless of gender, laying the groundwork for challenging discriminatory practices (An-Na'im, 2015). Moreover, religious communities serve as platforms for promoting gender-sensitive interpretations of sacred texts and challenging traditional norms that perpetuate gender biases (Ali, 2011).

Simultaneously, the paper identifies several barriers limiting women's political participation in Nigeria, such as socio-cultural norms, economic challenges, and institutionalized patriarchy. Women face discrimination within political parties, cultural bias against female leadership, and limited access to resources that are crucial for political campaigning and networking. (Arowolo, & Aluko, 2010). Government initiatives aimed at advancing gender equality in areas such as education, healthcare, and economic empowerment contribute to dismantling systemic barriers and fostering women's empowerment (United Nations, 2019). Additionally, political advocacy campaigns and grassroots movements mobilize support for gender-inclusive policies and challenge entrenched patriarchal structures (Chiluwa, 2021).

This synthesis underscores the interconnectedness of religious and political dimensions in addressing gender issues, recognizing that both spheres are essential for effecting meaningful change. By uniting religious values with political action, societies can create more inclusive and equitable environments that uphold the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of gender.

Gender discrimination, entrenched for centuries, remains a formidable barrier to achieving true equality (Ackerman, 2005; Agu, 2019; Meyers, 2012; United Nations, 2019). Its pervasive nature perpetuates cycles of inequality and marginalization, impeding societal progress and development (Adesina, 2007). Governments, religious institutions, and civil society must collaborate to dismantle patriarchal norms and empower women, unlocking the full potential of human capital for inclusive growth (Asaju & Adagha, 2013). Urgent action is needed to address discriminatory practices and promote gender equality, ensuring a fair and equitable society for all (Abdullahi, 2015). By advocating for the abolition of gender discrimination, we pave the way for a more just and prosperous future.

This study, in strongly advocating against gender discrimination, has the potential to contribute significantly to knowledge by shedding light on the pervasive nature of gender inequality and its detrimental effects on society. By examining gender discrimination in both ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria, the study provides a comparative analysis that deepens our understanding of the historical and cultural roots of this phenomenon. Furthermore, by highlighting the commonalities and differences in the manifestations of gender discrimination across different contexts, the study offers valuable insights into the complex interplay of social, economic, and political factors that perpetuate inequality. Ultimately, the findings of this study can inform policy interventions and advocacy efforts aimed at promoting gender equality and fostering inclusive societies.

2.1. Ancient Israel and Contemporary Nigeria: Commonalities and Differences in Gender Discrimination

Gender discrimination is a pervasive issue that has persisted throughout history and across cultures. In both ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria, patriarchal ideologies have shaped social norms and practices, resulting in the marginalization and subordination of women. The Hebrew Bible provides insights into the patriarchal nature of ancient Israelite society, where men held primary positions of power and authority (Ackerman, 2005). Women were often excluded from decision-making processes and leadership roles, with legal frameworks favoring male heirs in matters of inheritance, marriage, and divorce (Ackerman, 2005). Jenyo (2018) discusses how patriarchal norms in Nigeria perpetuate gender inequality, limiting women's roles in economic and political spheres.

Historically, both societies have upheld laws and customs that reinforce gender inequality. In ancient Israel, women were subject to patriarchal traditions that limited their agency and autonomy (Kirk-Duggan, 2012). These traditions extended to religious practices, where women were often excluded from leadership positions within the temple and other religious institutions (Bako & Syed, 2018). Udoh, Folarin and Isumonah (2020) examine how cultural norms and religious interpretations in Nigeria influence women's property rights, revealing systemic discrimination despite supportive religious doctrines. Gender-based violence and cultural practices further perpetuate discrimination against women, with issues such as female genital mutilation and early marriage prevalent in both contexts (Agu, 2019).

Moreover, patriarchal norms have restricted women's roles and contributions in both ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria. Despite women's significant contributions to various sectors, including agriculture and household management, their efforts have often been undervalued and overlooked (Olawoye, 1985; Awe, 1990). In both societies, women have been relegated to subordinate positions, with limited access to resources and opportunities for advancement (Olanrewaju, Adeyemi & Emezi, 2018). These shared experiences highlight the enduring nature of gender discrimination and the need for concerted efforts to address systemic inequalities.

While ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria share commonalities in gender discrimination, there are notable differences in the manifestations and underlying factors between the two contexts. In ancient Israel, religious institutions played a significant role in shaping gender norms and practices, with women often excluded from leadership positions within the temple and other religious institutions (Bako & Syed, 2018). This exclusion extended to legal and social frameworks, where women were subject to patriarchal laws that favoured male heirs (Ackerman, 2005). In contrast, contemporary Nigeria exhibits a more complex interplay of socio-cultural, economic, and political factors contributing to gender disparities (Oyewumi, 2003).

Olaogun et al. (2009) examine how cultural preference for male children influences family planning decisions in Nigeria, revealing that societal norms significantly impact reproductive behavior and desired family size. This bias often results in unequal treatment of girls and boys, with boys receiving preferential access to resources such as education and healthcare. Okoroafor and Iwueke (2019) explore how gender inequality, cultural norms, and patriarchy hinder women's economic development in Nigeria, advocating for inclusive policies and empowerment initiatives to promote equality. They asserted Furthermore, that gender-based violence, including domestic abuse and female genital mutilation, remains widespread in Nigeria, perpetuating cycles of oppression and inequality. These examples underscore the complex and multifaceted nature of gender discrimination in Nigeria, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to address deep-seated cultural norms and promote gender equality.

Advancements in science and technology have led to new forms of discrimination in contemporary Nigeria, such as selective abortion based on the sex of the foetus (Bastola, 2007). This phenomenon was absent in ancient Israel but reflects evolving challenges in modern societies. Additionally, the legal and policy frameworks addressing gender discrimination differ between the two contexts, with

contemporary Nigeria having more explicit laws protecting women's rights (Adesina & Onyishi, 2018). Despite these differences, both ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria grapple with gender discrimination, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to address systemic inequalities.

3. Methodology

The research methodology for comparing gender discrimination in ancient Israel (Numbers chapters 1-11) and contemporary Nigeria involves a mixed-methods approach. Qualitative analysis of biblical passages will identify gender-specific roles and limitations in ancient Israel, supplemented by historical commentaries. Similarly, qualitative analysis of existing literature and interviews in Nigeria will reveal contemporary gender discrimination patterns. Surveys will quantitatively measure discrimination prevalence and impacts in Nigeria. Data will be compared using comparative analysis techniques to identify similarities, differences, and trends across contexts. Findings will be interpreted within gender studies and social justice frameworks to inform policy recommendations. This approach ensures comprehensive understanding of gender discrimination's historical roots and contemporary manifestations, aiding in the formulation of targeted interventions for equitable societal development. The study was carried out among the pastors, leaders and church workers among the Pentecostal churches (PC), mainline churches (MC), evangelical churches (EC) and African independent churches (AIC) in the three Senatorial Districts of Lagos State. Lagos state was specifically chosen as being a multicultural city where people from diverse cultures in Nigeria are domiciled. The choice of Lagos State brings to reality the problems of cultural diversity on gender discrimination against women. Lagos State is made up of three senatorial districts which cover twenty local government areas. A total of 120 questionnaire was administered but only 84 pieces were retrieved for analysis.

In terms of demographic characteristics, it was found that 51.2% of respondents were male and 48.8% female (n = 84). For age, 21.4% were under 20 years, 35.7% were 20-30 years, 26.2% were 31-40 years, 9.5% were 41-50 years and the remaining 7.1% over 51 years (n = 84). For marital status, 54.8% were single, 39.3% were married, 3.6% were single parents and 2.4% were widowed (n = 84). These results highlight the relatively young profile of the sample obtained. This was reinforced by a subsequent question on employment status, which showed that 3.6% were apprentices, 45.2% students, 31.0% civil servants and 20.3% business owners (n = 84).

4. Findings and Discussion

The major findings resulting from the data collected and analysed in this study includes the following.

The study investigates gender discrimination in ancient Israel with nine key aspects explored. Firstly, it reveals that only male children over twenty were officially counted, disregarding women (Numbers 1:1-3). Secondly, it highlights Yahweh's demand for the sanctification of only firstborn sons, excluding daughters (Exodus 13:1-2). Thirdly, it indicates that only male offspring were consecrated for Tabernacle service, further emphasizing gender disparity (Numbers 3:11-12). Fourthly, it reflects a legal bias where only husbands had the right to be jealous over marital infidelity, perpetuating gender inequality (Numbers 5:12-16). Additionally, it underscores how women lacked a sign of covenant community as men did in circumcision (Genesis 2:18, 20). Moreover, it suggests a fundamental role for women as companions to men (Genesis 2:18). Furthermore, it notes that only males of the Levitical lineage were chosen for Tabernacle service (Numbers 3:3-10). Lastly, it points out that women were not included in the census of leadership generations and were often treated as property with no right to inheritance (Numbers 3:2). These findings illustrate pervasive gender discrimination deeply ingrained in ancient Israel's societal fabric.

Statements (%)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Only male children above twenty years get counted officially in Ancient Israel. Women were not reckoned with.	46.4	23.8	11.9	17.9
Yahweh demanded only firstborn Son of man and beast that opened the womb be sanctified unto Him.	23.8	46.4	17.9	11.9
Only human male sons that opened the womb were consecrated to take parts in the work of the Tabernacle.	35.7	27.4	11.9	25.0
Only husbands have the right to be jealous over their wives' sexual misconduct	23.8	31.0	23.8	21.4
A woman does not possess any sign of the covenant community as did the male in circumcision.	21.4	47.6	15.5	15.5
The essence of a woman is linked with her function as a companion to Man.	23.8	39.3	29.8	7.1
Only the males of the Levites lineage were chosen and dedicated to do the service of the Tabernacle	35.7	47.6	1.0	7.1
During the census of the generations of leaders, women were not reckoned with	6.0	47.6	34.5	11.9
A woman was rated the property of her father or her husband and thus has no right to inheritance	11.9	56.0	20.2	11.9

Table 1: *Perceived Nature of Discrimination against Women in Ancient Israel; source: Original Research*

Statements (%)	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Discrimination against women blocks the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace	57.1	35.7	1.2	3.6
Discrimination against women discourages them from playing their roles and contributing their quota to the development of the society	35.7	57.1	2.4	2.4
Discrimination against women comes with a high burden of poverty on women	34.5	47.6	11.9	6.0
The huge population of women in Nigeria has the potential to transmute the country from being poverty-stricken to being vibrant	39.2	35.6	11.9	13.1
Discrimination affects the capacity of women to participate fully in society which in turn has harmful psychological effects	35.7	47.6	8.3	8.3
Discrimination against women leads to their feelings of misery and shame, and even death	35.7	35.7	11.9	7.1

Table 2: *Perceptions of Consequences of Discrimination against Women to National Development; source: Original Research*

Table 2 above outlines the perceptions of the consequences of discrimination against women on national development. We shall discuss each item as follows:

1. The majority (92.9%) agree that discrimination hampers achieving equality, development, and peace, supported by Asaju and Adagba (2013).

2. The majority (92.9%) believe discrimination discourages women's contributions to society, which is aligned with Ejumudo (2013).

3. The majority (82.1%) aligns with Kolawole et al. argue that gender discrimination, reinforced by culture and tradition in Nigeria, significantly limits women's opportunities and access to resources, thereby deepening poverty—echoing Awodun and Ogunjemilua (2015) stance.

4. The majority (75.0%) assert that Nigeria's large female population could transform the economy, echoing PwC Nigeria's 2024 report that Nigeria's large female population could transform the economy. PwC Nigeria (2024) underscores that Nigerian women account for 41% ownership of micro-businesses, with 23 million female entrepreneurs operating within this segment, placing Nigeria among the highest entrepreneurship rates globally. The report also notes that women's participation in the formal sector is increasing, although challenges remain in achieving gender parity in leadership roles and the Gender in Nigeria Report (2012).

5. The majority (83.3%) agree discrimination limits women's societal participation, affecting mental health, consistent with mental health studies.

6. The majority (81.0%) recognize discrimination's psychological, physical, and spiritual toll on women, leading to misery and even death, supported by Ali (2011).

These findings underscore the pervasive impact of gender discrimination on various facets of society and highlight the urgent need for measures to address and eradicate such discrimination.

5. Conclusion

The comparative study of gender discrimination in ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria reveals striking similarities and differences in the manifestations and consequences of gender bias. Through a literature review and empirical analysis, this study sheds light on the multifaceted nature of gender discrimination and its profound implications for societal development.

In ancient Israel, patriarchal norms and religious traditions entrenched gender disparities, relegating women to subordinate roles in society. Archeological evidence and biblical scriptures illustrate the systematic exclusion of women from decision-making processes, inheritance rights, and religious practices (Nakhai, 2019). Moreover, cultural and legal frameworks perpetuated gender bias, limiting women's agency and autonomy (Guarneri & Dudley Poston, 1975).

Similarly, contemporary Nigeria grapples with entrenched gender discrimination, fueled by socio-cultural norms and economic inequalities. Studies reveal pervasive disparities in education, employment, and healthcare, with women facing barriers to full participation in society (Ejumudo, 2013; Unagha, 2006). Discriminatory practices such as early marriage and gender-based violence further marginalize women, perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality (Awodun & Ogunjemilua, 2015).

The empirical findings corroborate the prevalence of gender discrimination in both contexts. Survey results indicate significant agreement among respondents regarding discriminatory practices in ancient Israel, such as the exclusion of women from official counts and inheritance rights. Similarly, contemporary Nigerian respondents highlight systemic inequalities in education, employment, and access to resources, underscoring the enduring impact of gender bias on societal dynamics.

The consequences of gender discrimination are far-reaching and multifaceted. Discrimination obstructs women's participation in socio-economic development, hindering progress towards gender equality and sustainable development goals (Asaju & Adagba, 2013). It perpetuates cycles of poverty and inequality, limiting women's access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities

(Ejumudo, 2013). Furthermore, discrimination undermines women's mental and physical well-being, contributing to psychological distress and health disparities.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of gender discrimination in ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria underscores the persistent challenges and urgent need for action to address systemic inequalities. By recognizing the shared patterns of discrimination and understanding the diverse contexts in which they manifest, policymakers, civil society organizations, and religious institutions can work towards dismantling patriarchal structures and promoting gender equality. Empowering women, challenging discriminatory norms, and fostering inclusive policies are essential steps towards building a more equitable and just society for all individuals, regardless of gender.

5.1. Recommendations for Future Studies:

We advise that future studies could further explore the similarities and differences in gender discrimination across diverse cultures and historical contexts, expanding the scope beyond ancient Israel and contemporary Nigeria.

We recommend that new research should examine how intersecting factors such as race, ethnicity, class, and religion intersect with gender to shape experiences of discrimination and privilege. Intersectional approaches can provide a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics and inform targeted interventions.

We propose that longitudinal studies tracking changes in gender attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes over time can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of interventions and policy reforms aimed at promoting gender equality.

We canvas for qualitative studies using interviews, focus groups, and participant observation can capture the lived experiences of individuals affected by gender discrimination, providing rich contextual data to inform policy and practice.

We advocate for evaluating the impact of existing gender equality policies and initiatives is essential for identifying gaps and areas for improvement. Rigorous evaluation methods can assess the effectiveness of interventions and inform evidence-based policymaking.

We advocate that future research should consider the cultural and historical contexts shaping gender norms and practices, recognizing the diversity of experiences within and across societies. Understanding the root causes of gender discrimination is essential for designing contextually relevant interventions.

Further studies should explore innovative strategies for empowering women and challenging gender discrimination, including community-based approaches, digital technologies, and creative advocacy campaigns. Empowering women to assert their rights and advocate for gender equality is key to driving social change.

6. References

- Abdullahi, M.J. (2015). Islamic feminism: A quest for justice and gender equality in Nigeria, *Al-Qalam*, 20(2), 144-165.
- Ackerman, S. (2005). *Warrior, dancer, seductress, queen: Women in Judges and Biblical Israel*. New York, NY: Doubleday.
- Adésinà, J. O. (2007). *Social policy in Sub-Saharan African context: In search of inclusive development*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Adesina, T., & Onyishi, A. (2018). Gender inequality in Nigeria: Strategies and pathways forward, *Gender & Behaviour*, 16(3), 11373-11386.

Agu, L.I. (2019). The role of gender equality in achieving sustainable development goals in Nigeria, *International Journal of Advanced Academic Research: Social & Management Sciences*, 5(7), 1-14.

Akanji, O. (2018). Women and the informal sector in Nigeria: Implications for development, *Journal of Sustainable Development*, 11(2), 57-70.

Akanle, O., Adesina, J.O. & Nwaobiala, U.R. (2018). Turbulent but I must endure in silence: Female breadwinners and survival in Southwestern Nigeria, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 53(1), 3-18.

Ali, A. (2011). Gender inequality and religious personal laws in Pakistan: A critical analysis, *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 12(1), 1-16.

An-Na'im, A.A. (2015). Islamic foundations of religious human rights. In J. Rehman & S. Breau (Eds.), *Islamic law and human rights: Bridging the gap* (pp. 15-34). Abingdon: Routledge.

Arowolo, D. & Aluko, O. (2010). Women and political participation in Nigeria, *International Journal of Gender and Women's Studies*, 5(2), 1-10.

Asaju, K. & Adagba, S.O. (2013). Women and national development: A rhetorical perspective, *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 1(1), 15-21.

Awe, B. (1990). Gender and rural development in Nigeria, *Agriculture and Human Values*, 7(4), 57-63.

Awodun, A.O, & Ogunjemilua, T.J. (2015). Gender inequality, economic growth and development: A comparative study of Nigeria and South Africa, *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 4(3), 95-110.

Awolola, O.O. & Ilupeju, N.A. (2019). Female genital mutilation; culture, religion, and medicalization, where do we direct our searchlights for its eradication: Nigeria as a case study. *Tzu Chi Medical Journal*, 31(1), 1-4.

Bako, S. & Syed, J. (2018). Patriarchy and its impact on women's rights in Nigeria, *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work*, 3(1), 45-59.

Bastola, D.R. (2007). The missing daughters: Gender discrimination in the missing female children in India." *World Futures*, 63(3-4), 245-258.

Casimir, A., Chukwuelobe, M.C. & Ugwu, C. (2014). The Church and gender equality in Africa: Questioning culture and the theological paradigm on women's oppression. *Open Journal of Philosophy*, 4(2), 166-173.

Chiluwa, I. (2021). Women's online advocacy campaigns for political participation in Nigeria and Ghana, *Critical Discourse Studies*, 19(5), 465-484.

Ejumudo, K. (2013). Political gender equality in Nigeria: The other side of the coin, *Public Policy and Administration Research*, 3(11), 1-6.

Engels, F. (1884). *The origin of the family, private property and the state* Hottingen-Zurich Progress Publishers.

Gender in Nigeria Report (2012). *Improving the lives of girls and women in Nigeria: Issues, policies, and action*, Lagos: British Council.

Guarneri, C.F. and Dudley Poston, D. (1975). Women in Judaism, *Judaism: A Quarterly Journal of Jewish Life and Thought*, 24(2), 188-200.

Harding, S. (1991). *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Hartmann, H.I. (1981). The unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism: Towards a more progressive union. In L. Sargent (Ed.), *Women and revolution: A discussion of the unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism* (pp. 1–41), Boston, MA: South End Press.

Jenyo, O. (2018). Patriarchy and gender inequality in Nigeria: A threat to national development. *Journal of Business Economics and Management*, 6(7), 147–156.

Kirk-Duggan, C.A. (2012). Precious memories: Rule of law in Deuteronomy as catalyst for domestic violence. In A. Brenner & G. A. Yee (Eds.), *Exodus and Deuteronomy* (pp. 258–288), Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Kore-Okiti, E.T. (2024). From awareness to action: Tackling sexual and gender-based violence in Nigeria. *Adeleke University Law Journal*, 4(1), 81–95.

Levine, Baruch A. *Numbers 21–36: A new translation with introduction and commentary*. Anchor Yale Bible, Vol. 4A. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000.

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1848). *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, available at: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/>

Matthews, V.H., Chavalas, M.W. & Walton, J. H. (2000). *The IVP Bible background commentary: Old Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

Meyers, C. (2012). *Rediscovering Eve: Ancient Israelite women in context*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nakhai, B.A. (2019). Women in Israelite religion: The state of research is all new research, *Religions*, 10(2), 122.

Nakpodia, E.D. & Urien, J.O. (2012). Gender discrimination in Nigerian school system, *International Journal of Development and Management Review*, 7, 74–88.

Ojo, O. (2018). Political participation and gender inequality in Nigerian Fourth Republic. *Global Journal of Political Science and Administration*, 6(5), 1–9.

Okoroafor, E.C. & Iwueke, O.C. (2019). Gender inequality and women's economic development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Novel Research in Humanities, Social Science and Management*, 2(1).

Olanrewaju, O., Adeyemi, I. & Emezi, L. (2018). Gender inequality and the subordination of women in Nigerian societies: An overview of barriers to advancement, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 23(4), 542-556.

Olaogun, A.A.E., Adebayo, A.A., Kolade, C.O. & Olatunya, O.S. (2009). Influence of male child preference on contraceptive use and desired family size in Osogbo metropolis, Osun State. *African Journal of Midwifery and Women's Health*, 3(4), 185–190.

Olawoye, J.E. (1985). Rural women's role in agricultural production: An occupational survey of women from six selected rural communities in Oyo State, Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of Rural Sociology*, 2(1-2), 34–37.

Oyewumi, O. (2003). *The invention of women: Making an African sense of western gender discourses*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

PwC Nigeria. (2024). *Impact of women on Nigeria's economy*. PwC Nigeria, available at: <https://www.pwc.com/ng/en/assets/pdf/impact-of-women-nigeria-economy.pdf>.

Udoh, O.D., Folarin, S.F. & Isumonah, V.A. (2020). The influence of religion and culture on women's rights to property in Nigeria. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 7(1), 1750244.

Unagha, U. (2006). Gender discrimination and national politics: The Nigerian case, *Covenant University Journal of Politics and International Affairs*, 2(2).

United Nations (2019). "Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2019." UN Women and UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, available at: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2019>.

United Nations (UN) (2000). *United Nations millennium declaration* (A/RES/55/2), UN General Assembly, available at: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_55_2.pdf.