

AFRICAN FEMINISM AND THE POLITICS OF DIFFERENCE: CHALLENGING WESTERN NORMS THROUGH IGBO AND PAN-AFRICAN FRAMEWORKS.

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ABSTRACT

This paper interrogates the presumed universality of Western feminist frameworks by exploring the lived realities of African women through Igbo and Pan-African lenses. The objective is to critically assess the inadequacy of Western feminism in addressing the complex, intersectional forms of oppression African women experience—rooted not only in patriarchy, but also in colonial legacies, economic disenfranchisement, and cultural subjugation. Using a feminist qualitative content analysis, the study draws from indigenous African feminist theorists, cultural critiques, and historical accounts to illuminate the philosophical and political underpinnings of African feminism. It also incorporates case studies of Igbo cultural practices, such as widowhood rituals and inheritance systems, to illustrate how African feminist perspectives negotiate patriarchal structures through culturally embedded forms of resistance and communal responsibility. The findings reveal that African feminism is not merely a reaction to Western models but a distinct epistemological and political project grounded in the collective realities of African women. It emphasizes negotiation over confrontation, cultural specificity over universality, and collective well-being over individual autonomy. The study concludes that meaningful feminist discourse must recognize the politics of difference and foreground African voices in the global feminist movement. This has significant implications for feminist theory and praxis, as it calls for a decolonial turn that respects cultural autonomy while dismantling oppressive traditions.

KEYWORDS: Feminism, African, Patriarchy, African Women, Igbo.

1. INTRODUCTION

The central philosophy that guides all forms of feminism is the aspiration to breakdown the patriarchal system that places the interests and needs of men over women, definitions of feminism vary. Some consider the economic injustices experienced by women due to their sex (Richards, 1980), others ask that the interests of women be put first (Oakley, 1981), and there are those that considers all forms of oppression – race, class, abilities, sexual orientation, age – that women need to be free from (Smith, 1982), and much more. One of the major issues with the feminist movement of the United States in the 1970s and 1980s for example, was its lack of recognition that, while white women fought sexual discrimination, the struggles of black women existed on multiple levels. While white feminists were mostly middle-class women oppressed by white men, black feminists on the other hand tended to be working-class, and their oppressors were both white and black men, as well as their race and class (Collins, 1989; Springer, 2002; Smith, 2013; Rich, 2014). Therefore, to paint one picture of feminism was to ignore the experiences of black women in the United States. Audre Lorde (1979) put it eloquently in her open letter to radical feminist, Mary Daly, in response to her book *Gyn/Ecology*:

“To imply that all women suffer the same oppression simply because we are women, is to lose sight of the many varied tools of patriarchy. It is to ignore how those tools are used by women without awareness against each other. What you excluded from *Gyn/Ecology* dismissed my heritage and the heritage of all other non-European [sic] women, and denied the real connections that exist between all of us.”

This differentiation thesis also appears in the many scholarship on African feminism(s) (see for example, (Aidoo, 1998; Lewis, 2001; Nnaemeka, 2004; Oyewumi, 2005; Dosekun, 2007; Mekgwe, 2008; Naidu, 2013; Akin-Aina, 2011; Kemp et al, 2018). In her work, Filomina Chioma Steady (1981) argues that African feminism on one level seeks to differentiate itself from the global feminist movement, while on another level; it cautiously questions African cultural traditions. Steady and other theorists also argue that African feminism cannot adopt a gender separatist stance if it is “to succeed as a humane reformation project” (Mekgwe, 2008; 16). Similarly, Norwood (2013) attempts to interrogate

feminist theory from the perspective of African feminism, which she defines as encompassing all of Africa and its diaspora. Diaspora in this case refers to people of African descent who live outside of Africa as a result of slavery. African feminist theory is generally concerned with how African women on the continent and in the diaspora manage and challenge multiple layers of oppression; this includes the deconstructing of ideologies of racism and sexism that devalue them. The movement came as a result of the “experiences and conditions of colonialism, slavery and patriarchy” (Norwood, 2013), which has therefore meant that it has had a difficult relationship with western and white feminism (see Oyewumi, 2003, Hooks 1984, Williams and Chau, 2007).

Feminism as a global movement seeks to address gender-based oppression, yet its articulation varies significantly across cultural contexts. Western feminism has traditionally emphasized gender equality primarily through the lens of male dominance versus female subordination, framing the struggle as a binary opposition between men and women. This perspective centers on challenging patriarchal structures to secure equal rights and opportunities for women, particularly in political, economic, and social spheres (Mohanty, 2003). While effective in highlighting systemic inequalities, Western feminism has faced criticism for universalizing women’s experiences and insufficiently accounting for intersecting factors such as race, class, and culture (Crenshaw, 1991). Conversely, African feminism foregrounds the reality of gender asymmetry and inequality within a broader social, cultural, and historical framework. It acknowledges the intertwined nature of gender relations with community cohesion, tradition, and economic justice. African feminists tend to prioritize transforming gender dynamics within communal and familial structures, rather than positioning men solely as adversaries (Nnaemeka, 1998). This approach challenges the notion of feminism as a zero-sum struggle and instead advocates for inclusive reforms that respect indigenous social systems while advancing women’s rights. For instance: Take the issue of land inheritance. In many Western contexts, feminist advocacy often focuses on legal reforms that ensure equal inheritance rights for women, framing this as a matter of achieving parity with men (Oyèwùmí, 1997). The debate emphasizes dismantling patriarchal laws that restrict women’s individual ownership. However, in many African societies, land embodies ancestral lineage, communal identity, and spiritual significance beyond its economic value. African feminists therefore argue not only for legal rights but also for reinterpreting cultural norms that exclude women from land stewardship and decision-making roles (Amadiume, 1987). Their goal is to foster gender justice that transforms communal traditions to be more inclusive, rather than outright opposing male authority.

This paper interrogates the assumed universality of Western feminist narratives and reclaims African feminism through Igbo and Pan-African lenses, emphasizing indigenous knowledge systems and context-specific strategies for liberation. It examines various strands of African feminism, critiques of Western feminism, and proposed pathways for reconciliation and more inclusive feminist theorizing.

2. AFRICAN FEMINISMS IN CONTEXT

Discussions around the distinct characteristics of African feminism create a tension with Western feminism, which continues to view the world through a Western lens. Core arguments at the heart of the debate between African and Western feminism include the emphasis on motherhood over sisterhood—though there are arguments that this is not the same across Africa, with particular reference to the importance of sisterhood in South Africa—the economic realities across the continent compared to the rest of the world, and, fundamentally, the experience of being African.

Scholars like Nnaemeka (2004) urge caution in the process of developing African feminism to avoid the appearance of aspiring to become like Western women. Instead, she advocates for engaging in discussions and developments rooted in African cultures. There are also concerns about naming and definitions imposed from outside the continent.

Nnaemeka discusses the “use/abuse of theory” (2004, p. 361), recommending that, in constructing African feminist theory, scholars should build on “the indigenous.” She questions the act of theorizing alone—asking who is doing the theorizing, what grants them authority, and which social conditions the theory truly addresses. While she is not opposed to learning from other ideas, she insists that African feminism must be grounded in the lived realities of African women. Using the analogy of a chameleon, Nnaemeka encourages scholarship that is “goal-oriented, cautious, accommodating, adaptable, and open to diverse views” (2004, p. 382). She warns against rejecting foreign perspectives merely for being foreign, suggesting instead that they be evaluated and interpreted through an African lens.

These arguments align with similar critiques in other fields of African political and economic development, where scholars caution against the “follow your leader” approach that uncritically mimics Western models. To map a relevant and evidence-based trajectory for development—whether political, economic, or feminist—one must investigate the continent’s realities and histories. Ignoring the lived experiences of African women, and how these differ from those of women in the Global North, assumes a universal “feminist suffragette experience” (Naidu, 2013, p. 159). In her work on reproductive rights in South Africa, Naidu (2013) argues that “emancipation agendas” held by activists in the Global North are often alien in both concept and practice to African women. For instance, while the notion that sexual pleasure is a feminist right may seem self-evident in the North, Naidu asserts that, for African women, this remains a claim that must be forcefully and repeatedly articulated (2013, p. 156).

Nnaemeka proposes the concept of “nego-feminism”—an ego-free feminism of negotiation. She writes:

“Here, negotiation has the double meaning of ‘give and take/exchange’ and ‘cope with successfully/go around.’ African feminism (or feminism as I have seen it practiced in Africa) challenges through negotiations and compromise. It knows when, where, and how to detonate patriarchal land mines; it also knows when, where, and how to go around patriarchal land mines. In other words, it knows when, where, and how to negotiate with or negotiate around patriarchy in different contexts” (Nnaemeka, 2004, p. 378).

By centering the lived experiences of African women, African feminist scholarship can address Nnaemeka’s concerns around ownership and authority: Whose theory is this? Under what conditions is it being produced?

Nonetheless, the very notion of African feminism(s) has faced criticism, particularly regarding its perceived otherness. Oyewumi (2005) and others argue that feminism is un-African—an imported, colonial concept. This criticism often compares African feminism to Western models, implying that Western feminism is the default or universal form of feminist theory. Mekgwe (2008) challenges this assumption, arguing that treating Western feminist theory as a “universal phenomenon” (p. 15) ignores its limitations.

The claim that feminism is un-African has led to alternative labels, such as Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie’s (1994) STIWANISM (Social Transformation Including Women in Africa), Alice Walker’s (1983) Womanism, and Clenora Hudson-Weems’ (1980) Africana Womanism. However, African feminist theorists such as Ama Ata Aidoo (1998) and Anne McClintock (1995) reject the notion that feminism is a Western import. They argue that history shows that feminism has long existed in Africa:

“It is not new and I really refuse to be told I am learning feminism from abroad” (Aidoo, 1998).

“Denouncing all feminisms as imperialist ... erases from memory the long histories of women’s resistance to local and imperialist patriarchies ... Many women’s mutinies around the world predated Western feminism or occurred without any contact with Western feminists” (McClintock, 1995).

If one insists that feminism is un-African, the question arises: What does it mean to be African, and who decides? Why should African identity be a fixed, unchanging category? Dosekun (2007) argues against essentialist notions of Africanness and suggests that it is wrong to assume that historical African traditions lack evidence of women’s resistance to patriarchy. Such research, she contends, should not try to find feminism exactly as it exists today but should instead investigate whether, how, and why African women historically resisted oppressive gender conditions (2007, p. 43).

Mekgwe (2008) similarly cautions against a static conception of “Africa” in African feminism. She argues that references to “Africa” must reflect the present-day realities of African societies, rather than a nostalgic postcolonial framing:

“It requires that we certainly move beyond the notion of African victimhood within the colonial process, to recognize Africa as ‘participant’ in the different phases/faces of ‘colonialism’ and not simply as recipient” (Mekgwe, 2008, p. 22).

Looking back to pre-colonial Africa, there are numerous examples of women who exhibited feminist consciousness through leadership and resistance: Queen Njinga Mbandi of Angola (c. 1581/83–1663), Queen Ndete Yalla of Senegal (1810–1860), Charlotte Maxeke of South Africa (1874–1939), Nigerian activists Funmilayo Ransome-Kuti (1900–

1978) and Margaret Ekpo (1914–2006), and South African anti-apartheid activist Albertina Sisulu (1918–2011), among others.

Finally, the question arises whether we can speak of a singular African feminism or multiple African feminisms. Given the continent's vast array of cultures and subcultures, one cannot claim a single African culture—just as one cannot claim a singular feminism in Africa.

3. AFRICAN FEMINISM AND WESTERN FEMINISM

African feminism owes its origins to different historical and social dynamics than those that shaped Western feminism. Katherine Frank (1984:45) observes that Western feminism is “a profoundly individualistic philosophy: it values personal growth and individual fulfillment over any larger communal needs or goods.” This emphasis on individualism arises from the context of Western capitalist societies, where feminist movements historically grew out of bourgeois struggles for women's rights to education, political participation, reproductive choice, and economic independence within nuclear family structures. The Western feminist focus on autonomy has fostered debates around sexuality, the female body, and essentialism—issues often framed in terms of personal freedom, identity politics, and radical critiques of patriarchy.

In contrast, African feminism emerges from a very different socio-cultural and historical backdrop. As Gwendolyn Mikell (1997:23) points out, African feminism “does not grow out of bourgeois individualism and the patriarchal control over women within capitalist industrializing societies.” Rather, it develops within large, corporate, agrarian-based societies with communal traditions and strong cultural heritages that have been deeply affected by the traumatic legacies of colonization and economic dependence. African women have historically been integrated into their communities' social and economic life in ways that differ substantially from Western nuclear family models. For instance, extended family networks, clan structures, and communal landholding practices have shaped gender roles and expectations uniquely.

One of the foundational figures in African feminism, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, in her essay “We Should All Be Feminists” (2014), emphasizes how African feminism must grapple with issues of gender inequality within cultural contexts that value community and social cohesion, arguing for equality without necessarily replicating Western individualism. She asserts that African feminism must be “grounded in our own realities”—which includes the complex interplay between tradition, religion, and economic hardship.

Similarly, Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie in “Recreating Ourselves: African Women & Critical Transformations” (1994) argues that African feminism is about transforming society to acknowledge women's roles not only as individuals but as integral to communal survival. She introduces the concept of Stiwanism (Social Transformation in Africa Including Women), which critiques Western feminism for being too focused on individual rights and argues for a feminism that embraces social justice, development, and cultural affirmation.

For instance:

1. Communal Land and Inheritance Rights:

In many African societies, women's access to land and resources is mediated by communal ownership and kinship ties. African feminists, such as Amina Mama, highlight that struggles over land rights often involve negotiations within extended families or clans rather than solely individual legal battles. This contrasts with Western feminist struggles that emphasize individual property rights.

2. Widowhood Practices:

In Igbo culture, as documented by scholars like Chinyere Okeke and Ginika Nwankwo, widowhood practices often involve social rituals that impose restrictions on widows, rooted in both tradition and patriarchal control. African feminists critique these practices as mechanisms of social control that differ from Western feminist critiques of sexual freedom or reproductive rights. Here, feminism must navigate the tension between respecting cultural identity and combating oppressive practices.

3. Economic Roles and Informal Markets:

African women have historically participated in informal economies and trade networks—markets are often central to women's economic empowerment, as explored by feminist economists like Nkiru Nzegwu. The struggle here is often

about securing economic recognition and support within a communal system, rather than individual employment rights emphasized in the West.

4. Intersectionality and Multiplicity of Issues

African feminism, as Mikell (1997) and others emphasize, deals with “multiple inequalities”—it recognizes that gender oppression intersects with race, class, ethnicity, and the ongoing effects of colonialism and globalization. For example, Oyeronke Oyewumi critiques the universalizing assumptions of Western feminist theory, arguing that African gender categories are shaped by different historical and social realities, including the centrality of lineage and age grades, which Western feminism may overlook.

4. CRITIQUING OF ‘WESTERN’ FEMINISM

In this section, we will present the objections raised by African feminists against mainstream western feminism. African feminism differs radically from the western form of feminism. Feminism in African can be seen to originate from a range of sources, in addition to the western women’s movement.

The obvious connection between African and western feminism is that both identify gender-specific issues and recognize women’s positions internationally as one of second-class status and “otherness” and seek to correct that. International feminism to which various regional perspectives are contributed seems acceptable to African women while the western model is not. There is a significant difference between Western and African feminism in their conception of women as the subject of struggles. Western feminism primarily focuses on achieving gender equality, emphasizing individual rights and legal reforms to dismantle patriarchal oppression. In contrast, African feminism argues that gender discrimination is only one aspect of a broader system of oppression that includes colonial legacies, economic marginalization, and cultural injustices (Oyèrónkẹ Oyèwùmí, 1997; Ogunyemi, 1996). African feminists emphasize a communal and intersectional approach that reflects the lived realities of African women, integrating social justice, cultural identity, and economic empowerment alongside the fight against gender inequality (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994). This perspective critiques Western feminism’s universalism and advocates for locally grounded strategies that address multiple layers of oppression.

Another distinction is found in culture/tradition, socio-economic and sociopolitical issues, men’s role, race, sex, and/or sexuality. These categories are crucial because they serve as the foundation for the discourse of African feminism. They’re also dynamic in that they represent, to varying degrees, the concerns that have shaped many of the movements within western feminism. However, African feminism would have us believe that these very same categories unquestionably define the experience of feminism in Africa from that of the west.

Women around the world are not a homogeneous group with similar backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives. Their oppression differs from one woman to the next based on their culture, religion, race, economic status, and educational level. Western feminism has failed to address significant racial, class, and gender problems concerning African women: the problem is that Western feminism often applies a one-size-fits-all approach that doesn’t reflect African women’s realities shaped by colonial histories, racial dynamics, economic inequalities, cultural diversity, and specific social institutions. Western feminism has been viewed as an autocracy in its approach to African women’s rights in Africa. It is concerned with the realities of the challenges that African women face daily, many of which can be traced back to historical injustices.

According to Steady (1981:23), the African brand of feminism includes females' autonomy and cooperation; an emphasis on nature over culture; the centrality of children; multiple mothering and kinship; the use of ridicule in African women’s worldview; several traditional rights and responsibilities of women. Whereas the Western brand of feminism fosters dichotomy, individualism, and competition between sexes. With this perspective, I will argue that African women were far more feminist than their European counterparts. Feminism has always existed in Africa. Unfortunately, African women have blindly ascribed to an expression brought from the West because there was no word to describe this position linguistically. Long before the colonial invasion, traditional African societies thought and lives in a feminist manner, I will argue. The priorities of these two types of feminism, however, are not the same.

According to Oyewumi(2003), African feminists who want to distance themselves from Western feminism claim they have unique experiences in addition to the shared source of oppression. African women are oppressed, OgundipeLeslie(1994:542) explains the six mountains on the back of an African woman in explaining that African

women have additional burdens bearing down on them that differs from western feminism. These burdens she mentioned are:

- a) Oppression from outside (foreign intrusions, colonial domination etc.
- b) Heritage of tradition (feudal, slave-based, communal).
- c) Her own backwardness, a product of colonization and neo-colonialism and its concomitant poverty, ignorance etc.
- d) Her men, weaned on centuries of male domination who will not willingly relinquish their power and privilege.
- e) Her race because the international economic order is divided along race and class lines.
- f) Her self, the most important challenge to the African woman is her self-perception since it is she who will have to define her freedom. The meaning and application of the term feminism in Africa present several challenges for African female writers and critics, the majority of whom approach feminist theory with a skepticism that smacks of denial. Even though their works advance feminist goals, these writers consciously distance themselves from the feminist movement. In its theoretical framework, feminism is frequently interpreted as anti-male, anticulture, and anti-religion. As a result, it is difficult for a woman writer who does not share any of these ideologies to claim the feminist label (Nkealah, 2007:133). For example, some writers such as Bassie Head, Mariama Ba, and Buchi Emecheta, openly detach themselves from feminism, saying feminism is a white women's establishment instituted to protect their rights, and identifying with the movement is coterminous to subjecting blackness to white supremacy and sustained domination.

Principally, the African feminist blames western feminists for their focus on secondary needs such as the burden of domestic works ignoring the fulfillment of basic needs, which is the primary problem of Africans. One of the key criticisms African feminists direct at Western feminism is its emphasis on what are considered secondary needs—issues such as the unequal division of domestic labor, workplace representation, and sexual autonomy—while overlooking the more pressing basic needs that dominate the everyday realities of many African women. Basic needs refer to fundamental requirements such as access to food, clean water, healthcare, shelter, and education. In many African contexts, women's struggles are centered on survival and economic empowerment, rendering debates over domestic workload or gender parity in corporate leadership comparatively distant concerns. This distinction highlights a broader divergence between the two feminist traditions: whereas Western feminism often emerges from contexts where basic needs are met and can thus focus on individual rights and systemic sexism within privileged spaces, African feminism is rooted in the socio-economic and cultural conditions of postcolonial Africa. It prioritizes collective well-being, poverty alleviation, and the dismantling of structural barriers to women's survival and participation in society. By foregrounding basic needs, African feminists argue for a more context-sensitive approach that addresses the lived realities of African women, rather than imposing a universalized feminist agenda shaped by Western experiences. Western women who found themselves in a male-dominated society, though in a more civilized society, enjoy very high status, their society was deemed the most civilized, still combat their men to achieve equality and sees the men as her primary enemy and carrying out an age-old battle with her white male counterpart for subjugating her as his property, with the female control over reproduction and variation and choice within sexuality, their desires, and daily practices when attempting to achieve equality with men comes their struggles of secondary needs. In the United States, for instance, men and women enjoy almost equal social standing. Women can do anything they wished for, such as voting, owning businesses, holding political offices, and having the full spectrum of rights. They have reproductive and social rights to divorce.

Furthermore, African women were at the bottom of the equality scale. The introduction of capitalism and church missionaries are the factors that influence women's suppression in Igbo land. Beginning with the establishment of patriarchy, Women were progressively eliminated from their powers and their independent source of income and autonomy. The power was dominated solely by men who benefited from its travails. It was difficult for women in this period to inherit properties within the traditional system and they were reflected into the running of their respective households and submissive housewives. African men started oppressing their wives. African women were exploited, helpless, brutalized, and down-trodden from the savagery of the African male and a primitive culture symbolized by barbaric customs. These barbaric customs include arranged marriages, levirate, widowhood oppression, and child betrothal. Culturally Igbo women were perceived as profane creatures, those who deserve no respect and such should be treated as subordinate to men. They cannot think of themselves and their thoughts are considered worthless. They should not eat certain foods or meat; the married ones are regarded as men's property that could be beaten up or thrown

away at the least of provocation. The superiority of men to women,(and) the importance of male children, boys should go to school and girls should only go when they can, when there is money to waste and no work to be done at homes or in the farms and markets. Chinua Achebe(1976), points the significant values of male children in his book “Things Fall Apart” where he mentioned three conditions the Africans believe for a man to join his ancestors must hold;

- a) He must give birth to a male child,
- b) He must live a good life,
- c) Must be given a benefitting burial.

So, in Igbo land, a man without a male child wouldn’t join his ancestors. In Igbo customs, a man without a male child has no value and is denied certain rights.

Gwendolyn Mikell(1997) on a live video on YouTube, says in the USA, women often think feminism means I only determine what is best for me. But in Africa, feminism is very much a different thing; it is about how women interpret their interests and empowerment within the context of where they live and cultural values.

Many African scholars are cautious not to legitimize the use of borrowed concepts, perceived to be the hegemonic intellectual tools in explaining African social reality (Fokwang 2006:65). The caution expressed by many African scholars regarding the use of borrowed concepts—particularly those rooted in Western intellectual traditions—reflects a broader concern about epistemological dominance and cultural misrepresentation. As Fokwang (2006:65) notes, these scholars resist the uncritical adoption of foreign analytical frameworks, which are often seen as hegemonic tools that may distort or inadequately capture the nuances of African social realities. This skepticism stems from the recognition that Western theories are frequently grounded in historical, cultural, and philosophical assumptions that do not align with African experiences. By privileging local knowledge systems, indigenous epistemologies, and context-specific interpretations, African scholars seek to reclaim intellectual agency and ensure that analyses of African societies are rooted in frameworks that resonate with their lived realities and historical trajectories. Thus, their caution is not merely academic—it is a political and philosophical stance against intellectual colonization. One of the most persistent and well-founded critiques of Western feminism, particularly in its early waves, is its tendency to universalize women’s experiences and impose Eurocentric gender frameworks on non-Western societies. This universalism often overlooks the specific historical, cultural, and social configurations that shape gender relations in African contexts. For instance, Ifi Amadiume’s groundbreaking ethnographic work *Male Daughters and Female Husbands* (1987) highlights gender fluidity and non-heteronormative family structures within the Igbo-speaking Nnobi community. In this matrilineal society, it was not uncommon for childless women—often heterosexual—to marry other women. This practice was not about sexual orientation but rather a socially sanctioned strategy to access land, economic resources, and political influence. Therefore, framing such relationships through the lens of radical feminism as “lesbianism” risks erasing the indigenous logic behind them. It imposes a Western sexual identity framework onto practices that are not rooted in sexuality but in kinship, social survival, and power. Such conflation not only misrepresents African realities but also reinforces the very epistemic dominance that African feminists have consistently challenged. Kolawole(1997:7) states that African women who accept the label, politics, and consciousness of feminism risk being viewed by fellow African scholars as underdogs for western ideologies. For this reason, not all African women intellectuals embrace the feminist scholarship due to its association with radical versions of western feminists thought(Arndt, 2002; Dosekun, 2007; Essof, 2001; Gaidzanwa, 2003; Nzegwu, 2012; Mekgwe, 2008). Many reject the colonization of knowledge in which African feminists are discursively positioned as requiring enlightenment from their western feminists. But rather, than the absolute rejection of feminism of the West. I incorporate multiple perspectives into my African feminist's perspective by exploring their similarities to my advantage to strengthen my investigation of the various manifestations of oppression of Igbo women. Despite some similarities, I argue that there are concerns specific to African women that cannot be adequately theorized with western feminism.

There is the susceptibility of feminism of the west when used in isolation of other feminisms, to misunderstand or ignore the African women's experience and to conceptualize women from the global south as being in a state of the second epoch of colonization (Coulibaly,2015; Soyinka,1997; Mekgwe,2008). My African feminist’s theoretical framework in solidarity with the global feminist movement conceptualizes the unjust structure, socio-economics, and cultural practices that affect African women's wellbeing and experiences. As such, I see the feminist identity as a strong political indication of resistance to the theoretical and discursive positioning of being submissive and subordinated.

6. AFRICAN FEMINISTS CONTRIBUTION

As African feminist scholars, we believe there is a need to unify efforts in the execution of African feminism. The mass re-orientation of young women and men is key to molding future feminists. More importantly, men have to be accommodated in addressing issues that affect women negatively, that is, African feminists should strive hard to emphasize patriarchy and not man as the source of oppression against women. This would gradually reverse the propaganda that all feminists are frustrated women who are anti-men, anti-religion, and anticulture. More so, the Metaphysical consequences built around traditional practices considered harmful to women should be demystified as creations of patriarchy which have hardened into traditions over time. They should be explained with evidence, especially to young people, as self-serving structures sustaining sexism.

In addition, there must be deliberate efforts towards setting up period specific agenda on how to dismantle the reign of patriarchy. This can be only be achieved when there is a unity of purpose. By setting timelines to specific agendas, African feminists would be able to take stock and assess their achievements over some time.

7. CONCLUSION

This study has interrogated the limitations of Western feminist universals by foregrounding the specificity of African women's experiences through Igbo and Pan-African frameworks. It has shown that African feminism emerges from a distinct historical, cultural, and socio-political context—one marked by colonial disruption, patriarchal customs, and communal life structures. Unlike Western feminism, which often emphasizes individual rights and gender parity within liberal frameworks, African feminism adopts a relational and negotiation-based approach that seeks transformation from within, rather than opposition from without.

Drawing on both theory and lived realities, the paper highlights how indigenous epistemologies—such as nego-feminism and community-based activism—challenge dominant feminist paradigms while proposing alternative models rooted in African realities. Practices like widowhood rites, land inheritance customs, and traditional kinship systems were not only analyzed for their patriarchal dimensions but also reimagined through a feminist lens that seeks reform rather than cultural erasure.

The research recommends that future feminist discourses must resist the impulse to universalize women's struggles and instead engage more rigorously with context-specific experiences. Recognizing the multiplicity of African feminisms is crucial in building inclusive, intersectional, and globally relevant feminist knowledge systems. By centering African voices and theoretical contributions, this paper contributes to the ongoing effort to decolonize feminist scholarship and ensure that African women's agency, struggles, and knowledge systems are not marginalized but meaningfully integrated into global feminist thought.

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