NAME ONOGWU.O.IMMANUEL

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COURSE TITLE: GENDER STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

QUESTION: IS GENDER RELATIONS CHANGING IN THE 21ST CENTURY? WHAT ARE THE AREAS OF CHANGE AND THE FACTORS DRIVING THIS CHANGE

**Gender** is a state of being a male or female. In most cases, it’s typically defined with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological differences.

**What is Gender Relations?**

Gender Relations Gender relations refer to relations between men and women that are socially determined by culture, religion, or socially acceptable ways of thinking or being. These relationships between men and women, as they exist in most societies, are characterised by the marginalisation of women in decision making and other forms of power sharing in the home and places of authority. The economic exploitation of women and extensive violence to the person and psyche of women the problem of unequal gender relations is both personal and systemic. This is giving rise to gender-based violence, death, poverty of families, neglect of children and a variety of societal dysfunctions In the interest of justice, empowerment and the development of families and communities, these relations need to be analysed and new solutions found for their transformation. The problem will need to be analysed both from its personal and systemic roots.

In the current generation of 21st Century, gender is often misunderstood as promotion of women who have taken more active role in different sectors and careers despite some traditions still hold women inferior in their society like numerous cases reported in Indian cultures women still come from traditional strict households, they have accepted their roles and feel comfortable in their decisions or lack thereof. Feminist movement gained momentum in the 1960’s and 70’s in the United States together with other Human Right groups that advocated for equal rights among all genders in recent centuries after observing women gender being domesticated by cultural norms, religious believes, traditional marginalisation yet for the few women who were out speaking role models showed great hope. Gender roles in communities changed lately whereby women now play equal role as men in owning lead large companies, very active in their families and communities, own personal businesses, manage big organisations, head political groups, earn higher academic degrees from all sectors equal to men, to mention but few as compared to early centuries. Both genders actively attend sporting events; go to bars and all other outdoor activities that were dominated by men alone. The 21st century demonstrates equal participation of both genders in different activities as compared to early centuries that kept women behind by being responsible for domestic chores. Gender being a central organising principle of society in social construction which governs the process of production, reproduction where consumption and distribution are elements in that setting, gender has remained a critical and major focus of society despite equal rights. Young genders both males and females are groomed up with knowledge of man being head of family. Religions across all denominations still hold believe of man being a superior being from woman gender. This naturally has left a gap between the two genders where by man still carries weight of being the head of the household though women headed families also perform equal roles but the family still remains incomplete without a man due to title, security, and other duties that women can’t perform.

**FACTORS DRIVING THE CHANGE OF GENDER RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

**Equal economic empowerment**

This is a cornerstone of development. When both genders male and female have equal economic empowerment in a society, poverty will be reduced, economies flourish and the health improves among all genders as well as other service deliveries. Gender inequalities create gap for underdevelopment that is largely realised in developing countries despite strong efforts and campaigns on women empowerment by development agencies, there is need for both because some of the other gender (male) are incapacitated economically that has always created domestic violence. Therefore if women are more economically empowered may lead to vulnerability and can leave risks of high rate of divorce in families due to care and respect that male traditionally demand from their spouse. In women empowerment, there have been some improvements recorded in many reports like in United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) 2015 report. Reports show that men spend much time on leisure each day while women spend more time doing unpaid domestic works which traditionally are her roles and responsibilities while men’s role is to provide for the family. Therefore leaving man out of empowerment may mean women take role of being heads of families whereby it may inject in serious rate of divorce that might call for another advocacy on equal treatment for men. However, there is need for equal economic empowerment for both genders.

**Education and Exposure for both genders**, we are all responsible and have power to change the world the way that pleases us. There is need for education of genders and expose them to different environments so they can know what happens in each part of the world. Despite massive explanations about gender but still remains as if its unheard from different parts of the world due to inadequate education and exposure of genders to different environments and cultures. For example the traditional approach of understanding gender in Africa may be far different from understanding of gender in Europe. This inadequate exposure and education leads to misunderstanding of gender in the current generation. Some traditions in Africa in viewing gender interpret it in terms of their tradition whereby it’s a taboo for women to wear trousers likewise men to wear skirts while in Europe, its normal for a woman to wear a trouser for example Brighton College in Britain is the first school to scrap uniform policy so all children can wear skirts or trousers (Mirror online by Steve Robson. January 20th 2016). Therefore there is need for education and exposure for both genders.

**Cultural transition**

Adapting new culture especially in the 21st Century of technology which has taken young generation by surprise has led to frustrations and disenchantment with new things that are both positive and negative to gender relations. This can be termed as cultural shock that has brought hard time in handling proper transition from tradition to technological culture that has always created gap in between genders of male and female. There is need for proper and sustainable cultural transition from traditional culture to technological culture that would not harm gender in any way.

**Counter stereotypes through young generation**.

It’s so challenging to erase gender stereotype from adults and old age. However, to counter the existing wide spread stereotype across the world on gender, there is need to start educating and sensitising young generation in schools and out of schools. These are categories to be changed despite long period of time to realise positive results but its sustainable and very effective solution. A child’s imagination when paired with experimental learning opportunities can be a powerful tool to confront gender challenges. This is a proven fact that children once instilled in them on gender solutions, they will always remain and believe in the same unlike adults who will remain referring to past practices whether good or bad but will always say ‘we are accustomed to’ based on past practices. Therefore stereotype can be resolved through young generation.

REFERENCE

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