NAME: PAUL YUNANA GAJE

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QUESTIONS: Is gender relations changing in the 21st century? What are the areas of change and the factors driving?

Gender is defined as the relations between men and women, both perceptual and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. It is a central organizing principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution. Despite this definition, gender is often misunderstood as being the promotion of women only. Gender issues focus on women and on the relationship between men and women, their roles, access to and control over resources, division of labor, interests and needs. Gender relations affect household security, family well-being, planning, production and many other aspects of life. 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 culture. 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 organizing 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.

Certain areas of change in gender relations are as follows;

a. Marriage Proposals

Marriage proposal in early centuries, men typically propose to women which was traditionally their role but in the 21st Century, women are stepping up by proposing to men as they get down on their knees. They have boldly come out elaborating men initiative proposals that can’t wait any longer for men to propose. Sometimes cultures term them as taboo breakers who boldly ask their future husbands to be hand in marriage. Men traditionally take head the process of proposing for marriage but this has changed in the 21st century where women now take bold action in dating and propose for marriage. This has left some traditional cultures thinking of women proposing as prostitutes desperate for marriage for example in my Iteso Culture, men take lead in proposing for marriage but when woman proposes, man shys off in fear of mockery and insults from fellow men or woman might be having HIV/AIDS as to why she boldly took men role of proposing for marriage and men prefer traditional marriage proposals or weddings. This happens in rural villages. However, todays women can propose for marriage. According to Chicago Tribune Article on marriage, more women are proposing than ever before. Some are giving men engagement rings.

b. Dress code.

Culturally dress code for men and women are defined by norms and expectations that relate to an understanding to tell difference between man and woman. The dress has the most direct contact with the human body and is therefore considered an integral part of the self. Garments influence and shape the appearance with significant impact on the construction of social identity (Tseelon 1989). Dress codes differ from culture to culture, religion to religion, tribe to tribe, some people use different dress code for different settings for different gender (marriage parties, church/mosque, offices, etc) for example the easiest identified dress code is men put on trousers and shirts while women put on skirts and blouses. However in the 21st century, the trousers are worn by both genders. Women dress on trousers, shirts and neck-ties like men while men as well take part in women dresses, skirts and blouse though not widely in public. This has been associated with gay proactive men. Meanwhile 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). In Islam women are required to wear modest forms of attire which covers from head to toe. Therefore all this depends on the traditional cultural environment either in rural or urban though in most urban settings adapt any kind of dress code. In other words the world of clothing is changing as new cultural influences meet technological innovations.

c. Work

Traditionally, both genders have different roles and responsibilities whereby men were considered responsible for taking care of the family financially; guiding the family while listening to their spouse though they make final decisions while women are to take care of children and household duties. During the 20th – 21st centuries, there strengthened Gender inequalities in all areas that are rooted in social structures but also in attitudes, said Professor Gillian Robinson, of the University of Ulster. Many arguments have shown imbalance at work. Others defend men to be more burdened while others argue that women are more burdened with daily chores such as laundry, cleaning, cooking food, shopping, looking after sick relatives and carrying our repairs while men only show significant contribution by other services of mending faulty items around the house. Both genders to some extent perform equal domestic duties though tradition still holds some societies.