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 Is Gender Relations Changing in the 21st Century? What are the areas of Change and the factors driving the Change?

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.

What are the areas of Change and the factors driving the Change?

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.

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.

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.

GENDER CHALLENGES

Gender has for the past experienced many challenges that have led to massive advocacy for equality with specific promotion of women to equate with men. This has always varied from country to country. Most activists in developing countries focus on more basic issues like combating violence against women and equal access to other services like education, health care, job opportunities etc which men have dominated. Below are some challenges faced by gender;

Domestic violence; the violent confrontation between genders in families, at work, in public etc which involves physical harm, sexual assault. More than 40% of domestic violence victims are male according to World Development Report, 2012 by MIT’s Esther Duflo. Victims of domestic violence are men dominating while number of women is always left battered and bruised. Men assaulted by their partners are in most cases ignored by police according to reports on equal treatment. However according to religious believe where man is treated as head of the family while woman is termed as weaker vessel quoted from holy bible 1 Peter 3:7 which states ‘Likewise you husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour to the wife as to the weaker vessel and as being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers be not hindered.’ This is where gender challenge is embraced despite equality advocacy.

LANGUAGE

There are some words used that are inherently biased against women. The words are arranged in such a way that they recognise men with superiority and exalted titles and women with more of lower positions. Phrases like Man and woman, Mr and Mrs, his and hers, boys and girls, brothers and sisters, husband and wife, King and Queen, curses like ‘mother fucker’, ‘mother scorn’ etc. The use of many terms shows gap between which can be described as biasness. This superiority titles create gap between genders which have always been understood between the two genders differently from each other despite efforts by feminists and human right groups to emerge the two understandings from both genders. In Living Language (p. 222) by George Keith and John Shuttle described gaps between the two genders as follows; women naturally talk more than men, are more polite, are indecisive/hesitant, complain and nag, ask more questions, support each other, cooperative whereas men gender swear more, insult each other frequently, are competitive in conversation, dominate conversation, speak with more authority, give more commands and do more of interruptions. Therefore language as a challenge in gender has element of stereotype against women gender more than men gender hence demarcates gap between the two genders.