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**THE OBVIOUS MISTREATMENT OF THE FEMALE CHILD IN NIGERIA**

The fact that merely reading this topic would stir arguments, disagreements, uneasiness in some people and be ignored and hissed at by others says it all. Arguments arising from my obvious choice of words- mistreatment, because these acts and practices have gone on for so long they pass as ‘’normal”. It’s been normalized and encouraged, never brought to light or checked throughout the years and now it seems like it is innate, adopted and passed down. The mistreatment that the female child faces in Nigeria is not restricted to age, status or habitat.

Firstly, I would highlight this common misconception of the wife alone being in charge of house chores and cooking. This is the most common misconception that has been passed down for generations, limiting the usefulness and worth of a woman to these two basic life skills, which should not be gender exclusive. Society and families have perpetuated this thinking that you even find men not caring to learn these basic life skills because they feel it is not their duty or responsibility. Most times you find the lady’s family members or even family friends guilt tripping her for not mastering her culinary skills, never highlighting that she needs the skill to survive as a human being, but making it all revolve around a man. This has a negative effect on the female child, makes her question her worth and puts unnecessary pressure on her. It leaves her with the constant fear that she might never be enough for her future husband and might be one day be replaced in her home.

Another issue is one that is highlighted in most homes, where the female children are treated differently when compared to the male children. This arises from the unhidden preference to male babies in most homes which transcends into how the females are treated, catered for, invested in and most times disciplined. In most homes, it is expected to see the female children waiting on the men and cleaning after them simply because they are men and “supposedly” aren’t meant to do all that. Less attention is given to the male children in teachings of responsibility, morals, duties and many more; they are less likely to be held accountable for their wrong doings as opposed to the female child. In terms of investing, buildings and plots of land are bought in the names of the male children and hardly ever the female children, because they are going to be “married out” someday. This is the sad reality, is this to say that the female child does not have the right to financial stability and independence?

Thirdly, the continuous disrespect and undermining of females by the males. This is displayed everywhere, behind closed doors or in the open, in the market, school, work places, churches and even on the streets. This nerve-wrecking issue takes so many forms, the biggest being, entitlement, we find that most men feel entitled to a woman’s services, her body, her emotions, her time and even her decisions. In cases of rape, the perpetrators and supporters of the perpetrators allow their feelings of entitlement to a woman’s body deter them from seeking consent. Men guilty of emotional and physical abuse allow their feelings of entitlement to a woman’s services and emotion cloud their judgment. Women are disrespected by their male superiors at places of work, random men on the street disrespect women every day, invading their personal space, using condescending words when they get rejected. It is the overall undermining of the females by the males because they feel they are superior to women and act according to that belief.

There are so many ways that the female child is mistreated in the society that we live in and it’s sad because, it seems they can’t escape it no matter how much they will it, until people recognize these “norms” to be the problem that they truly are and decide to make conscious efforts to fix it. It should be normalized that both genders are equal which should transcend into privileges, discipline, the manner at which they are addressed, opportunities and day-to-day encounters. It is bad enough that the female child feels her entire being is tied to a man- her future husband and should try everything in her power to please him, keep up with his shortcomings, endure, never complain, be submissive and act strong in order to keep her family together. The pressure and expectations shouldn’t be one-sided, men need to be held more accountable, they need to be cautioned and educated more. And hopefully with time the female child would be seen as so much more.