

PRINT MEDIA COLOURATIONS OF FEMINISM AND ITS NOTIONS AMONG FEMALE LECTURERS IN SELECT SOUTH-SOUTH UNIVERSITIES, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

This study examined female lecturers' dispositions about feminism and whether their perception is in accordance with the various print media vibrations of feminism. The study was anchored on the critical theory. The study gathered data from respondents using the survey research design. The population of the study was a cumulative number of female lecturers in the University of Port Harcourt and Rivers State University, which amounted to 567 respondents. The copies of the questionnaire were distributed to 226 respondents who were drawn from the population using the Krejcie and Morgan online sample size table. The Chi square formula was used to calculate and test for a hypothesis. Findings revealed that while female lecturers' perception of feminism aligns with print media colorations of feminism, their notions of feminism are both inborn (individualistic), and borne out of their socio-cultural and religious inclinations (generic). The study concluded that although the extent to which female lecturers agree to the colorations of the print media on feminism varies, there is an alignment. Based on the foregoing, the study recommended that the Nigerian society should recognize the importance of women, give women equal opportunities as their male counterparts and the freedom to live as humans rather than properties and that the Nigerian print media (particularly the newspaper) should be an advocate of women's movements and help in giving women a stronger voice.

KEYWORDS: *Print Media, Feminism, Universities*

INTRODUCTION

The discussion of gender biases and sexism may seem strange, exaggerated and extreme to women of the present generation. This is because the history and revolution that has brought about the relative gender-based development that women now enjoy in comparison to their male counterparts are not met with a universal appreciation. For instance, females were restricted in their roles and rights as individuals; they were not allowed to get a formal education, secure employment or exercise their franchise. Women were marginalized, relegated to the background and limited to performing domestic chores and duties. Societies were under the control of the patriarchy who assigned the scope and boundaries of what women's roles should be. Up until the 18th century, women by virtue of gender were considered inferior to men and the societal role of the females were perceived as second fiddle (Okon, 2016). The marginalization that women were forced to accept as the norm is what instigated feminism and women-based writings.

There is diverse literature on feminism, and they have been met with varieties of reactions by readers. The term "feminism" originated from the French word 'feminisme' and was first spotted in the 1880s in Hurbertine Auclerts's "La Citoyenne - a - La Feminite" (Ghorfati & Medini, 2015: 7) where she used the term to describe the domination of women

and to lay claims to the rights of women and emancipation that had been promised to them by the French revolution. Feminism is a word that was used to represent the collective issues of the female gender as a social category rather than a sexual one (2015). Feminism focused on women's experiences and brought to bear the oppression that women were subjected to in the society. "Feminism' is an umbrella term for a range of views about injustices against women" (James, 1998: 61). In general, feminist struggle is about the emancipation of women with respect to their social, cultural, political and economic rights and how gender roles and identities are understood and altered (O'Shaughnessy, Stadler and Casey, 2017). James (1998) describes feminism thus:

Feminism is grounded on the belief that women are oppressed or disadvantaged by comparison with men, and that their oppression is in some way illegitimate or unjustified. Under the umbrella of this general characterization there are, however, many interpretations of women and their oppression, so that it is a mistake to think of feminism as a single philosophical doctrine, or as implying an agreed political programme (p.146).

The method of describing feminism may differ from writer to writer based on their ideological dispositions, but a universally accepted definition of feminism can be characterized as a struggle against all forms of patriarchal and sexist oppression. The issues of domination and oppression have taken numerous forms such that feminists have had to regroup where necessary and strategize to adjust accordingly. There are constant print media reports on women's organizations coming together in one form of a group or another to champion a gender-based cause. Literature on feminism regularly discusses the fluid problems and social ills that women are faced with in the society as females (Harney, 2014). The challenges that feminism seeks to address today are worlds apart from the issues on which the foundation of feminism is based and women from different cultures have a varying degree of issues that affect them. Although feminist struggles began in the West, women's oppression has been diagnosed as a general but diverse issue facing women from different cultures and nationalities (Walters, 2005).

Despite the challenges that feminism faces, it has made a significant headway because women today, even in developing countries like Nigeria are relatively experiencing some freedom in areas that used to be the exclusive preserve of men. Nigerian women for the most part can get a formal education, exercise their franchise, get a job, hold top positions in the corporate world (even in the presence of men), etc. Feminism therefore ought to be embraced in Nigeria by everyone especially the women but most especially the women in the academia – who are saddled with the responsibility of transmitting cultural heritage through teaching.

The focus of this study is to understand female lecturers' mindset towards feminism, attempt to link female lecturers' views of feminism with contemporary print media texts on feminism and to establish a connection between female lecturers dispositions to feminism with printed discourse.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Feminism in Nigeria has been a distant tool of intellectual discourse and political action especially to women scholars and activists. Adichie (2014) stressed that everyone should be a feminist because feminism seeks to better the lives of women. In books, newspaper articles, magazines and other print media are writings about women's movements and feminism. These literature chronicle women's issues that go as far back as the 18th century, describing the challenges and changes that feminism has undergone on its journey for women's liberation. Having brought women thus far, it is surprising to find educated women who do not identify with feminism. In Nigeria, female lecturers who direct beneficiaries of feminism, are

in the profession of teaching and research, and spend a considerable amount of time around printed materials do not overtly identify with feminism. This study therefore seeks to investigate what female lecturers in select South-South universities in Nigeria know about feminism, and if their knowledge of feminism logically aligns with print media depictions of feminism.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study was interested in understanding female lecturers' notions of feminism in relation to print media texts on feminism. Specifically, this study sought to:

- Find out how female lecturers of South-South universities in Nigeria perceive notions of feminism.
- Ascertain that female lecturers of select South-South universities perception of feminism logically aligns with the print media colorations of feminism.

HYPOTHESIS

The following hypothesis was casted from the research questions raised in this study:

- H1: There is no significant relationship between print media colorations of feminism and the notions of female lecturers in select south-south universities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to McKinnon (2007), critical theory is attributed to Max Horkheimer and the Frankfurt School of Social Research in Frankfurt, Germany. Horkheimer (1937) in his essay "Traditional and Critical Theory" stressed the need for a change in scholarly pursuit of knowledge affirming that textual interpretations must be strictly and ultimately for the purpose of understanding and consequently changing the inequalities within the social system. Critical theory at first glance connotes negativity because with the term 'critical' comes disapproval and disagreement (LittleJohn et. al., 2009). Yet critical theory has been proven useful in the study of communication (particularly political communication) because it offers frameworks to analyze the intricacies and incongruities of domination and oppression within an organization in particular, and society in general, in order that the oppressed and marginalized might engage in practical activities to emancipate themselves (2007; Brian, 2014; Wodak, 2006 as cited in Amadi, 2017). Critical theory sees theory and action as two sides of a coin, which means that where there is a textual examination of 'domination', the inexorable subsequent effect is 'emancipation'. Exponents of this theory assert that theory and action should go hand in hand such that texts, social life and lived experiences are analyzed to find patterns and discrepancies in order to unearth and "destabilize dominant modes of understanding by surfacing underlying assumptions" (Harney, 2014: 1) with the intent of making hegemonic societies more equitable for the marginalized group. When texts are read critically, issues within the system such as gender, class, race, etc. would be uncovered by readers whose consciousness would have been raised so that they may search for ways to liberate themselves.

The justification for the selection of the Critical Theory rests on the fact that the theory recognizes the importance of readers' ability to be open to persuasion and attitudinal tilt should the text "appeal to their reason and ideal" (Gouldner, 1976: 84 as cited in Amadi, 2017: 98). Critical analysis and interpretation of discourses are done so that individuals may find ways to change their existing circumstances specifically by helping the marginalized and the oppressed groups in the

society to attain and experience more equitable situations. In critically analyzing texts, society is better read and evaluated, bearing in mind the inequalities that exist in the structures, and critiquing such structures of domination so that the possibilities of transformations could be unearthed.

The Rise of Print Media Texts

The print media is the oldest form of mass communication. It is usually thought of as a source of news, information and entertainment, carrying messages to a widely dispersed audience, and binding people into communities by distributing messages that become a shared, relatable experience (Vivian, 2006). Print media texts are effective communication tools for learning everything about the world. History, art, culture, and religion are sustained by print media texts. Through the print media, thoughts and ideas are expressed and shared widely, and powerful forces use the medium to ideologically influence readers. Baran (2013) explains that the print media is a vehicle for carrying individualistic and generic thoughts.

The print media can be traced back to the 1440s when the German, Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable printing press with which he printed bibles (Rodman, 2010). Before the advent of printed texts, hand-copied materials were used and the copy-making process was strenuous and painstaking, making the mass production impossible. Because of the ‘sophistication’ in the ability to purchase, read and decipher meaning of written words and symbols, literacy was kept only for the monarch and elite class.

Gender Perceptions in Nigeria

The differences in gender as practiced in Nigeria is glaring. Men and women belong to two different social categories (Okunna, 2002). As with every male-dominated society, gender relations in Nigeria is characterized by imbalance to the detriment of the females. Women are generally regarded as inferior to men, believed to be physically and intellectually weaker and slower than their male counterparts (Olusola, 2015). Women are kept in subordinate positions to men, and the society overtime, has become accustomed to it. Ojiakor (1997: 73) explains that “the Nigerian men have always believed that Nigeria belongs to them and women are at best the rent-paying tenant. Over the years, women have struggled to stay in this misconception”. The influence of culture and tradition on the “beliefs” of the Nigerian society cannot be overemphasized. For instance, a girl is taught to ‘respect’ her male siblings because they are boys, even when the girl is older; she must learn how not to stand up to a man. Women in Nigeria are generally seen as ‘the weaker sex’ which is a reason why they have low access to credit and income opportunities as compared to men (Okoye, 2009). In terms of means of production, and ownership of properties, women are also marginalized. Nwankwo (2001) states that “traditionally, women do not own land and therefore cannot inherit land either from their fathers or husbands”. The patriarchy of the Nigerian society reserves the rights to land ownership and inheritance to the males of the household. Along with the lands and estate, widowed women and female children are inherited by the males. Any immovable property a woman acquires – along with her – belongs to the man she marries. In terms of decision and policy-making, Uchem (2010) notes that it is a cross-cultural practice that women’s voice are scarcely heard, not even on matters that directly affect them. Decisions are taken for and on behalf of the society by men. Interestingly though, domestic chores are solely the responsibilities of the woman. President Muhammadu Buhari in an interview in 2016 said that his wife (the First Lady of Nigeria) belonged “to my kitchen and my living room and the other room”. Women are subjected to polygamy, child marriage, female genital mutilation (as a way of controlling her sexuality), all manner of domestic violence and abuse, dehumanizing widowhood practices, discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace, etc.

Feminism and Feminists

Feminism began as a political strategy to change the course of women's subordinate positions as forced on them by the patriarchy (Walters, 2005). Although culture, time and country may change the course of the force that drives the movement, but in general, feminism around the world is about securing equal rights for women. Feminism became a global movement in the 20th century; however, its origin is traced back to the late 19th century when the term *feminisme* was first used by Hubertine Auclert (1892) in Paris (Gianoulis, 2015). What is understood as feminism today, did not start out that way. Interestingly, feminism was not a word that women used to identify themselves and women questioned their inferior status, subordinate roles and socio-economic positions long before the emergence of the term and not all women's rights organizations called themselves feminists (Freedman, 2001). Fraisse (1995) observes that feminism in medical terminology was used to signify a feminization in men but was first used in political terms to describe the virilization of women. In defining feminism, many dictionaries emphasized the fact that it is a cause championed at improving the lives of women. Thus despite the dynamics that may have caused the changes that have inspired the existing multiple feminisms, the objective of feminism have always basically been to subvert the inequalities that exist among sexes. "Feminism is a concerted movement led by women to gain equal status with men" (Freidman and Weiss, 1995: 26). Feminism is the recognition of the discriminating positions that women have been placed in by the patriarchy, and the decision to do something to change such unnatural conditions. A feminist is one who has come to the realization that the socio-cultural and political organizations of the society that were put in place by androcratic structures have caused women to be subjected to gender inequalities and biases. Friedman et. al. (1995) paints a clearer picture:

A feminist is someone who is interested in studying and understanding gender as a system of cultural signs or meanings assigned by society, to sexually dimorphic bodies and who sees these cultural signs, which constitute gender as having a direct effect on how people live their individual lives (p.27).

Feminists see the binary composition of gender as a fundamental issue that breeds hierarchy and oppositions – masculine and feminine – in which masculine is always privileged over the feminine. For feminists, women are always limited by reason of gender as the males are always at an advantage to take the front and center stage on political, social, economic and cultural positions in the society. Feminists believe that this power structure is wrong and hence should be changed. Adichie (2014: 17) states that "a feminist is a man or woman who says yes there is a problem with gender as it is today and we must fix it". Choosing to be a feminist simply means that the individual is looking forward to a fairer world where everyone gets to be treated as humans.

METHODOLOGY

This study was a quantitative research, which utilized the survey research design. The population of the study was the aggregate of female lecturers from the University of Port Harcourt (UniPort) and Rivers State University (RSU), which according to the schools' registry (2019) was 414 and 153 respectively. The sample size of the study was drawn from the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) Small Sample Table, which indicated that at a population size (N) of 550, the sample size (S) would be 226. The study further adopted a proportionate sampling technique in order to determine an even distribution of the sample:

Proportionate Size for Uniport

$$\text{Proportionate size} = \frac{\text{Uniport}}{\text{Population}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

$$= \frac{414}{567} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

$$= 73.1\%$$

$$= 73.1\% \text{ of } 226 = 165 \text{ respondents}$$

Proportionate Size for RSU

$$\text{Proportionate size} = \frac{\text{RSU}}{\text{Population}} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

$$= \frac{153}{567} \times \frac{100}{1}$$

$$= 26.9\%$$

$$= 26.9\% \text{ of } 226 = 61 \text{ respondents}$$

The study distributed 165 copies to respondents of UniPort and 61 copies to RSU respondents using the accidental sampling technique. Data that were collected are presented in the tables below:

Table 1: Questionnaire Distribution and Rate of Response

Institutions	Copies of Questionnaire Distributed	Number of Questionnaire Retrieved	Usable Copies	% Usable Copies
University of Port Harcourt	165	159	154	73.7%
Rivers State University	61	57	55	26.3%
Total	226	216	209	100%

Table 1 above describes the distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire. A few copies were returned with deliberate or erroneous blank spaces and invalid entries, while a couple of questionnaires were incomplete and therefore deemed not usable for the study. Out of the 226 copies of questionnaire that was distributed, only 209 that were returned were valid for use.

Table 2: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
B.Sc./B.A	2	0.96
LLB	1	0.48
M.Sc./M.A	88	42.1
Ph.D.	109	52.1
Other	9	4.3
Total	209	100

Table 2 shows the distribution of educational qualification of respondents. Majority of respondents (75.9%) holds a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) degree. Only two respondents (.96%) hold a B.Sc./B.A. This means that a significant number of respondents have attained the highest academic height.

Table 3: Respondents’ thoughts on whether or not Women and Men should have Equal Socio-Economic, Legal and Political Opportunities

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	198	94.7%
No	11	5.2%
Total	209	100

Table 3 above shows that there is preponderance on the affirmative. This means that 94.7% of female lecturers agree with the idea that women and men should have equal socio-economic and political opportunities.

Table 4: Respondents’ Perception on whether or not the Clamour for Equal Rights is Realistic

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	201	96%
No	8	4%
Total	209	100

Table 4 demonstrates that there is prevalence on the affirmative. This implies that 96% of female lectures support the notion that the clamour for equal rights for women and men is achievable. As indicated in the table above, 96% of respondents agree, which gives credence to the study.

Table 5: Respondents’ Perception of Print Media Colorations of Feminism

Nature of Responses							
Item	S	A	D	SD	WMS	Decision	
Issues such as sexual abuse, domestic violence, abortion rights, sexuality, child marriage, etc. are not achievable in our socio-cultural setting	0	48	282	52	1.8	Disagreed	
Women's issues should be varied, weighed and addressed individually rather than generically.	12	32	128	7	2.8	Agreed	
The fight for women's rights is redundant, flawed, misguided and no longer necessary	4	36	82	155	1.3	Disagreed	
Newspapers opinion that feminists are "men-haters, unattractive, lesbians, frustrated, divorced and troublemakers	0	6	360	27	1.9	Disagreed	

Source: Desktop research

Table 5 is a spread of the responses of respondents on the colourations of feminism as portrayed in print media texts. The majority of respondents disagree with the perception that the second wave feminists’ clamour for equal rights in the private sphere is not achievable in our socio-cultural setting and at a Weighted Mean Score of 1.8, the perception is disagreed upon.

The majority of respondents are in agreement that with the third wave feminists that women’s issues should be addressed individually rather than generically. The result is accepted at a Weighted Mean Score of 2.8.

The fourth wave feminists' idea that feminism is redundant, flawed and misguided is disagreed upon by the majority of respondents at a Weighted Mean Score of 1.3.

The majority of respondents disagreed with the notion newspapers colorations of feminists at a Weighted Mean Score of 1.9.

Computation of Values for X2 Test

Hypothesis test on the relationship between print media colorations of feminism and the perceptions of female lecturers of feminism.

Table 6: Chi Square Distribution

<i>O</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>O - E</i>	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{\sum(O - E)^2}{E}$
198	145.8	4.2	17.64	0.12
11	2.89	8.11	65.8	22.7
Total				22.87

Chi calculated = 22.87

Degree of freedom = 1

At a p-value of 0.05, the null is rejected because the Chi Calculated is greater than the Chi Critical. This means that there is a significant relationship between the print media colourations and the notions of female lecturers of feminism.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

Findings in Research Question 1 showed that the majority of female lecturers (99%) agree with the general notion of feminism that women and men should have equal socio-economic and political opportunities. This finding is in corroboration with Friedman and Weiss (1995) who are of the opinion that women should gain equal statutes with men. Friedman and Weiss aver that feminism, which is all about achieving equal rights for women and men stand a better chance in today's world because the world is changing and how individuals rationalize is also changing.

Findings for Research Question 2 revealed that female lecturers perception of feminism do align with print media colorations of feminism in a number of ways. Majority of respondents perceived feminism to mean creating a better society for every individual by making the world a fairer place for the women. Feminism is all about removing restrictions, unconscious thoughts, negative actions or unconscious negative thoughts towards the female folk so that gender equality can be achieved. It means treating all humans equally and having their interests and economic, social, cultural, political and legal rights protected in all circumstances irrespective of sex. This finding is corroborated by the definition of feminism in O'Shaughnessy et. al. (2017) that feminism is a struggle for the emancipation of women in terms of their political, cultural, social and economic rights with a view to grasping the ways that gender is understood, and gender roles are assigned.

CONCLUSIONS

The study concludes that Nigerian female lecturers of South-South universities' notions of feminism are in alignment with what is recorded in print media materials. The level to which these female lecturers agree with print media colourations of feminism varies but all the participants of this study understood what feminism stands for and how the print media

contextualize notions of feminism. Female lecturers unanimously agree that the conditions of women as compared to men are unfair and should be improved upon so as to close the gap of inequality.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby put forward:

- Female lecturers' notions of feminism are influenced by their specific socio-cultural and religious backgrounds and for the movement of feminism to be effective in making the Nigerian society a better place for women, feminism should be tailor-made to fit women's individual oppressive problems.
- Women should equip themselves with contemporary literature on feminism so as to be abreast with the development of the gender-based issues within their environment.

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