

# **Gender role attitudes among Nigerian students: Egalitarian or Traditional?**

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## ABSTRACT

Expanding research acknowledged that men and women are shaped by society in that their perceptions of whom they are and how they behave is not solely because of an individual. This study looks at how society influences the process of our gender identity and how it dictates the role we are expected to play according to our gender. This research was conducted for the purpose of developing a scaling tool to determine the attitudes of Nigerian college students towards gender roles. College student's attitudes should first be determined in order to change this traditional view to gender and to achieve a more egalitarian view. Quasi-experimental design was used for this study; the research sample was comprised of one college's students chosen using size-proportional stratified random sampling method. A total of 100 students (44 males and 56 females) were included in the sample. Data collected was via self-administered questionnaires. The Gender Roles Attitude Scale (GRAS) contains eight items (Traditional gender roles) which was used to gather results filled in by the participants. Statistical significant differences were determined among all survey items. The results findings that were obtained showed that the survey is a valid and reliable instrument for determining college students' attitudes towards gender role. The results indicated that Nigerian female students studying in Ireland had more egalitarian gender role attitudes than the male respondents and there was no significant difference between female students' hours of work and that of the male students. In conclusion, these results suggest that both culture and society is a factor in changing people's gender role attitudes or that education facilitates this change.

## Introduction

This thesis is investigating the attitudes towards traditional gender roles among Nigerian men and women students in a college in Ireland. This traditional gender roles for women includes tasks such as solely being responsible for rearing the kids, being a „stay at home mum’, overseeing the smooth running of the house and leaving the head of the house (A man) to financial matters and work outside the home. Many of the research that has been carried out on gender roles focuses on the formation of gender identity and gender role and the differences between how men and women see themselves in the family.

This research tries to find out if men and women still adhere to the way society has shaped them or have they torn away from the reigns that society have put on people. This study intends to bring more light into how much society has really changed or not and if this movement in societal norms has raised the number of people breaking free from the so called traditional gender role expectations. The independent variable is gender (male and female) and the dependent variable is „attitudes towards gender roles’.

Society has long been identified as a salient factor in determining the course of one’s identity and expected way of behaviour. Gender roles and identity are typically determined by society and with the shift in cultural norms and values; these expectations have gradually begun to change. It will be interesting to see if people still act in accordance to the way society have laid the rules.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *What are gender and gender roles?*

The issue concerning gender roles have been taken notice of in recent times especially since the 1960's. An early author on gender roles defined it as roles that evolve out of gender identity which direct people on how to behave and conduct themselves socially according to their gender (Lipman-Blumen & Tickamyer, 1975). Other writers have since tried to make sense of the concept and to define it. Therefore, in order to understand gender roles, we need to investigate more thoroughly what gender is all about.

Traditional psychoanalytic theories have examined gender and suggest that it is formed most importantly through our unconscious representations of either man or woman (Sweetnam, 1996) thus, linking gender identification as a fixed nature. Feminist's theories challenged the idea of gender as fixed and instead offered an alternative explanation of gender being fluid, moving between different identifications (Sweetnam, 1996), that means although men and women follow a plan of action that is laid down as a set down rule by the norms in their traditions, the norms are not fixed, they keep changing as a result of influences such as globalisation, industrialisation and technological advancement (Inaterama, 2006). Thus sociologists suggest that gender will keep being open to change as a result of social, cultural and political alterations that constantly affect its meaning. In another definition, Cynthia (1998) describes gender as peculiar and specific qualities that are created culturally for women and men for the purpose of supporting and holding the social order of

every society. Through this culture, people are showed how to dress, act, speak and fulfil expectations. Margaret Mead's study in 1935 among the tribes of New Guinea clarified that gender roles assumed by people are not biological but cultural (Lindsey, 1990). Similarly, West and Zimmerman (1987) also argue that women are taught to be feminine and men are taught to be masculine and their execution and accomplishment of these roles are used to judge them. In addition, scholars argue that gender is represented as a concept that people constantly reinforce-„doing gender', thus, when men and women repeatedly do the same thing over again not because it is seen as a „man's or woman's work', but because it establishes the truth and the correctness of their identities as male or female, it then becomes absolutely necessary to „do gender' in all works of daily activities for the rest of their life (Inaterama, 2006). Therefore it becomes awkward and embarrassing if one does not „do gender' appropriately as there are consequences for people who do not do them and acceptance of people who „do gender' (Butler 1988). To understand more about the construction of gender and how it is enclosed tightly in our minds, Bem (1993) explains three specific ways „gender' is seen. The first is conscious practice of placing male human beings as superior to women or the masculine point of view at the centre of a female's view of the world. The second is women and men being identified as totally different in all aspects of life (e.g. dressing and thoughts) and the third lens are identifying the differences between men and women as a result of biology (nature). “These three hidden assumptions have significant impact on how men and women perceive their reality because they are imbedded in cultural discourses, social institutions and individual psyches and as a result, they reproduce and sustain the inequality between men and women” (Inaterama, 2006).

### *Male and female gender roles*

The term gender roles refer to people taking up appropriate roles according to their gender especially when it comes to traditional gender roles. The traditional belief that specific behaviours are only appropriate to a woman or a man and the egalitarian belief that any behaviour is equally appropriate for men and women varies (Fisher and Arnold, 1994 as cited in Hill and Harmon, 2007). Gentry, et al. (2003) further states that historically gender roles have been given to people based on their stand in society, work and family. The male roles such as providing for the family become instrumental for the man and women are able to express themselves through their nature of nurturing (Hill and Harmon, 2007). Thus, social theory explains that the role people occupy determine how they view the world (gender attitudes) so as people become home makers or breadwinners, they identify with attitudes that are appropriate for those roles (Eagly and karu, 2009) The idea that man is the breadwinner is fundamental to the teaching of the society such as nursery rhymes, stories and tales. The little girl learns that her place is in the home where she cooks and cleans, performs chores and be good and passive while the little boy do not have to be clean or do chores the way girls do (Turkel, 2000).

Gender roles are often outward expressions of a person's gender identity, which are developed through personal and cultural influences. They define how males and females should behave, think and interact; while social influences such as peers, television, school, and religion teaches and reinforces an individuals gender roles, parents are a crucial factor in influencing gender roles (Gauntlett, 2008).

*Media representation of gender roles in the past*

Gender roles are often outward expressions of a person's gender identity, which are developed through personal and cultural influences (Unger, 1979). They define how males and females should behave, think and interact; while social influences such as peers, television, school, and religion teaches and reinforces an individual's gender roles, parents are a crucial factor in influencing gender roles (Blee & Tickamyer, 1995).

Based on a study done on US television shows in the 1950's, 1960's and 1970's only 20 to 30 percent of characters were female and by mid-1980's there were more women in leading roles, although gender roles and humour was still traditional and sexist (Gunter, 1995 and Elasmars et al, 1999). As the years went on women began to be more represented although in only a very traditional way. According to Davis, (1990), a research in 1987 found that 43 percent of female characters were most common in comedy shows, while only 29 percent of women were leading characters in action-adventure programmes compared to 15 percent that it was a decade earlier in a research done by Miller, (1975) as cited in Gauntlett, 2008).

In addition to the passive characters women played in television programmes, (Gunter, 1995) stated that his 1970's study showed that marriage, parenthood and domesticity were represented on television shows as more important to women than men. The qualities that are precious in society's culture such as professional or political ambition, individual striving, and creativity, commitment to bigger issues, financial success and self realisation were considered not normal for women who pursued or had these attributes (Turkel, 2000).

In McNeil's study (1975 as cited in Gauntlett, 2008) showed that female leading characters on television were married housewives who concerned themselves

with romance and family problems in 74 percent of the cases compared to men in only 18 percent of the time. Female characters did not work and even when they did, they were not shown to the television viewers. Women who worked were shown to be unsuccessful with relationships and men, unlike men who had dominating characters and were strong decision makers.

The study in general showed women were to be passive, weak, victimised and supportive while men were aggressive or assertive, victorious, adventurous and active (Gunter, 1995). The media, including newspapers, movies and television advertisements represented gender in a stereotypical way, not only were men shown to act in a certain masculine way but they were more male than female characters and representations of women reinforced feminine traditional gender roles- but with time as we can see in the above discussion, changes have started to occur.

#### *Media representation of gender roles today*

Gender roles cannot be escaped. Images of what are expected of us, how we should act, speak, dress and even perceive others is thrown at people from every angle by the media. There are sexual societal norms and values that a majority or influential groups operate which greatly influences the behaviour of the general population (Carli, 2001) whether it is being married, rearing children, choosing to have a career, making family decisions, personal decisions, couple interaction or sexual behaviour (Rochlen, et al, 2008).

However, with the change in mindset on expected gender role norms for men and women, media has also been a huge force in circulating this shift; although this is different for diverse ethnic groups. While traditional stereotypes have been used to represent gender roles and behaviour in the media especially before the 1980's, its

strength have greatly reduced in modern times. The research done on television programmes in the 1990's found that 43 of the major characters were female, only 3 percent were represented as housewives compared to the 1970's survey and overall female characters on television were young, independent, single and unattached to family pressures (Elasmar, et al, 1999). A more recent study done by Lauzen, et al (2006) cited in Gauntlett (2008) stated that apart from the change that was seen in the 1990's with the increase in number for female characters in the media compared to decades earlier, not much has changed in 2000's. From his study of US sitcoms, he found that 61 percent of characters were male while 39 percent were female and in reality shows the number was slightly higher with 49 percent of females.

Although media representation of women and men today is becoming more diverse and most especially more frequent for women, there is still a huge gap between how many times women are shown on media and how they are portrayed compared to men (Gallagher, 1995). As recent television dramas try to represent the new man (gentle, emotional, supportive) and the new woman (independent, strong and career orientated) in a different light, detailed analysis still suggest that those are simply pretences to cover up the real old-fashioned assumptions (Buonanno, 1991, 1992). Studies done on British and German televisions have questioned the claims that media make about introducing different points of view (Externbrink, 1992 & Geraghty, 1995)

#### *Measuring attitudes towards gender roles*

Studies conducted to determine the gender role attitudes of university students in Turkey found that male students had more traditional gender role attitudes than females who had more egalitarian views regarding gender roles (Bayakal 1988 &

Guvenc, 1996). Similarly, a survey done in Ohio University in the U.S on African students suggested that a large number of respondents although thought that equality should be fair and just, there is a widespread belief that a husband's role is to provide financial security to his wife and children and women as nurturers are better fitted for child rearing (Inaterama, 2006).

As women and men are expected to fulfil roles that are attributed to them in social life- with men associated with being more superior to women; Everyday life takes on the direction of putting women as second place that continues the circle of gender inequality, which supports men more than women, thus causing women to be discriminated against (Ain & Demirel 2003). These inequalities are more pronounced in the labour/work force, wages, education, making decisions and freedom of choice- they all strengthen inequality between women and men (World health organization, 1998).

Moving on to recent times, society has shifted from traditional gender role attitudes to a more modern one in the past fifteen years with the increase of female and mothers participation in the labour force especially in more developed countries (Boehnke, 2011). In the US, women in labour force increased from 41 percent in 1970 to 61 percent in 2000 and for married women with children, labour force participation increased from 30 percent in 1970 to 63 percent in 2000 (US Department of commerce, 2002) This development can be attributed to the changes in values, labour force, educational importance, welfare regulations and living arrangements (Jaumotte, 2003). In turn gender role attitudes of working mothers, (especially full time one's) and their offspring's have less traditional gender role attitude than those of stay at home mum's (Cassidy and Warren, 1996).

As well as women participating in the labour force, studies have also shown that the more educated a woman is, the more her views become egalitarian and gender stereotypes are questioned, but at the same time, having children steer couples to more traditional roles as the family will rely predominantly on the man's income (Boehnke, 2011). Although in the present day it would be difficult to hold on to traditional gender roles of a woman staying home and not working when both the couple are contributing to household income or where the woman is the breadwinner of the home (Festinger, 1957 as cited in Boehnke, 2011). The influence of government in family and employment policies such as „equal pay for equal work' means that women, especially the younger ones are more egalitarian in gender role attitudes than older women who are more traditional (Boehnke, 2011).

In general a survey by Boehnke, (2011) on US, Asia and European countries about women and men's gender role attitudes found that in all countries on average, women's attitudes to gender roles were more egalitarian with a figure of 3.37 higher than men's at 3.25 on a scale where 1 means having the most traditional attitudes to gender roles and 5 meaning having the most egalitarian view. In addition, East Germany was the country that showed the highest egalitarian views while Slovakia showed the most traditional view to gender roles.

Boehnke (2011) explains that just like women, men who had attained higher education and whose mother's worked for a living also developed egalitarian views; but unlike women, men whose wives worked and earn more than they do showed more equal gender roles attitudes- age or having children has no influence on men's attitude. For men, the relationship between gender role attitudes and earnings is moderated by the hours worked in a week, which means that a traditional man's wages will increase with more hours worked than that of an egalitarian man even with

more hours worked (Stickney, 2007). This is because egalitarian men take on more household chores than traditional men and therefore egalitarian men have less energy for their paid work unlike traditional men who have a lot of energy to use (Becker, 1985). Although men's gender role attitudes have become more egalitarian, the housework labour performed by them is still non-significant compared to women (Bianchi, et al, 2000) Men support the work of women to work for pay but do not take over a fair share in house hold chores and child rearing and also suggest that women's financial contribution to the family income is only a supplement, therefore it is not straightforward to interpret the support or views of men on the subject of women's participation in the labour force (Habodaszova, 2010).

In general, socio-structural situation of women in a country favours more egalitarian gender role attitudes for men and women that cultural structure, when a man is the breadwinner, economic inequality in the family has a traditional effect to gender roles and finally women are the only ones whose attitudes to gender roles becomes traditional when they have children (Boehnke, 2011). Men in general are more likely to take the view of traditional gender roles of women in the family although education is a factor that reduces this view (Habodaszova, 2010).

#### *Education level of Nigerian females*

One of the most important factors that indicate a person's social status is level of education, and for developing countries such as Nigeria, women's level of education is considerably lower than men's compared to developed countries (Akin & Demirel, 2003). The total number of female students enrolled in university in Nigerian in 2005 was 285,000 compared to almost 500,000 thousand male students (UNESCO, 2010). Schooling ratio of girls in primary school participation for boys is

65% and for girls 60% in 2007-2010, secondary school participation for boys is 29% and for girls is 22% in 2007-2010 and overall literacy is 78% for males and 65% for females (UNICEF, 2010). These findings show that there is inequality between men and women for all level of education in Nigeria. Therefore, there is a need to lift the barriers stopping women from furthering their education to a higher level, as education does not only create opportunities but also reduce poverty (OECD Observer, 2005). Educated women are more likely to be in the labour force, marry later in life with fewer and healthier children. These women become more independent and are able to know their rights and get the confidence to fight and claim them (UNFPA, 2008).

Education in Nigeria is important for every one especially women as they are greatly discriminated against. According to „right to education (2008) “Girls are less likely to access school, remain in school or to achieve in education”. As a result, women are not aware of their rights or the fact that they can claim them and the opportunity to participate in decisions that will better them in general (political, economic and social places). A person’s level of education does not only broaden one’s horizon and enlarge their view of the world, but helps earn people respect and recognition both personally and socially.

On another hand, since education is recognised as an important influence that contributes to sustainable development and poverty reduction in Third World countries such as Nigeria (Dauda, 2013), the necessity to encourage gender equality in education is vital as women’s education is not only a means of reducing fertility rate and population growth, but it encourages good habits in child rearing that reduces child and maternal mortality, thus promoting general life expectancy (World Bank, 2001; Herz and Sperling, 2004). Recently women in Nigeria have begun to participate

and contribute to the growth of the Nigerian economy by joining important and specialised sectors such as the Nigerian stock exchange (NSE), Economic and financial crimes commission (EFCC), National Agency for Food Drugs Administration Control (NAFDAC) and federal ministries (Dauda, 2013), thus, this new progress has increasingly encouraged more women's participation in education.

Recent studies on education has suggested that men and women having equal educational opportunities will achieve the maximum productivity in structural transformations and growth as well as reducing poverty level; "education also enhances women's bargaining position in the family and society (Barro 1999 and Sen 2000). In addition, female education also "encourages smaller, healthier, better-educated families" (World bank, 2001; Hill and King, 1995) and without doubt "education can be one of the best defences against HIV/AIDS" (UNESCO, 2002) because of the knowledge students get in school about HIV and the discouragement of not using SID's protection. Finally, female education leads to independence as a result of increased income and productivity for the individual and for the country as a whole, this is supported by Odusola (1998), in her study of educational attainment and good health status of Nigerian women contributing to income in six Nigerian states that included Anambra, Borno, Cross River, Ogun, Plateau and Sokoto.

### *Traditional Nigerian Society*

The restraints placed on Nigerian women on achieving their independence and full potential in a traditional Nigerian society is without escape to the roles that women play. According to Adeyokunu (1981), apart from the domestic work that women are known for, Nigerian women are more engaged than men in all areas of agricultural activities; despite this fact, women are still treated as second class. Thus,

gender discrimination against women still continue in areas such as labour market, policy making, education, training and child care (Mamman, 1996). Furthermore, Afigbo (1991), states that because of the huge difference in access to education among men and women, it is not surprising that lack of education is the source of female discriminations.

Therefore it is important to raise women's participation in education in order to give women power and authority in personal and socio-economic improvements (Stephen, 1992; Palmer and Almaz, 1991; Caldwell, 1979). With the bias and major differences against women compared to men, efforts have been made to educate Nigerian women by Non governmental organizations. Although special schools have been set up especially in Northern Nigeria for girls and women (Anugwom, 2009), women are still considerably lacking behind to men in education (Ezeani, 1996), but the gap has been closing in with more women going back to school and some men quitting schools for trade.

The result of this closing gap is that the annual report of National Universities Commission since 1988, show a notable and significant in enrolment figures of females in Nigerian Universities compared to what it was 10 years ago and female enrolment in primary schools have become equal to boys (Anugwom, 2009). With education being the drive in gaining skills and knowledge needed to develop and improve oneself in order to contribute adequately to the society, equal participation male and female is crucial in society (Shaheed, 1995)

### *Gender role Differentiation in Nigeria*

Differences in gender roles in Nigeria could be said to be very separated from one another and common knowledge in social institutions, which are derived from

culture rather than from biology (Oakley, 1974). Within the family, it is apparent that females are considered subjects and second place and the man is the head of the household and breadwinner who makes all decisions and rules for every other member of the household to follow. In older periods, the man owned and controlled not only all the means of income, but also his wives and children. It is the man who has the *Oko* (Male reproductive organ), he has the *Oko* (farmland) and also owns the *Oko* (farming instrument-hoe) (Beier, 1995).

During the colonial period however, there began to be slight changes seen as regards to the role that women played in the Nigerian society especially with the introduction Christianity and western style education. According to Omadjohwoefe (2011) some women were able to acquire education and were able to read and write which in turn gave women the opportunity to change the roles that they played in society. Although for the same traditional stereotypical attitude such as being incapable, delicate, weak and not intelligent enough, most women were prevented from getting this education (Dadirep, 1995).

Today, although gender role attitudes are still very much traditional and favours the male, it has become more egalitarian in some areas than the rest. For example, in the northern part of Nigeria, Islamic practices are still common where there is less formal education, early marriages and childbirth, confinement to households (Polygamous) where they are responsible for all household chores and food processing (Schmidt, 2004). Unlike women in the north, women in the south had acquired more western style education and have at the moment started to appear in the modern sector such as jobs in law, engineering, teaching, medicine and agriculture.

The aim of this chapter was to introduce and discuss the gender role attitudes of Nigerians, female and male gender roles expectations from society, the role that the

media has on influencing people's attitudes towards gender roles and the factors surrounding the differences between male and female gender roles such as lack of education.

### **Aims and objectives:**

Many studies are present in different cultures about determining the attitudes towards gender roles. On the other hand, attitudes towards gender roles differ between cultures and countries. The purpose of this study was to develop a valid and reliable tool to determine the attitudes of college students towards gender roles in Ireland. The aim of this study is to investigate the gender role attitudes of Nigerian students in a college in Ireland. As Nigeria is considered more of a traditional society than Ireland, the study will measure whether the attitudes of Nigerians students living in Ireland have changed from traditional gender role attitudes towards a more egalitarian one. This study also aims to find out if there are differences between Nigerian men and women's gender roles attitudes. Overall, the study should contribute to the literature within the fields of Gender role as a whole by creating awareness of the current differences between Nigerians living in Ireland and Nigerians living in Nigeria.

### *Rationale of Study*

The study focuses on adult male and female students that are Nigerians. This study is important; as it will be looking at the data received from the students related to gender roles and attitudes and will be comparing data to view how the attitudes of men towards gender roles differ from women's.

### **Hypothesis.**

Hypothesis one: Predicting that there will be significant differences between the number of women who work and the number of men who work.

Hypothesis two: There will be a significant difference between females and males on traditional gender roles attitudes

## **Method**

### *Design*

This study was a quantitative research design that used questionnaires to collect data with a quasi-experimental approach in which the independent variables were the sex of participants i.e. male and female and the dependent variables were attitudes towards gender roles. This survey research is appropriate for this survey as it is associated with asking questions of „What?’ and not „Why?’ in describing a large population such as 100 college students. Furthermore, this design will suit the research as it is about collecting general findings. The quantitative approach had to be used as it was related to the hypothesis that the study was aiming for.

### *Participants*

A total of 100 participants took part in this study, 60 were females and 40 were males. Participants were college students aged 18-55 from different faculties and were randomly chosen from the college premises. The questionnaire was handed out in classes, library and within the college where Nigerian students were found. The purpose of the research as well as ethical issues including participants rights were relayed to each participant before they answered questions based on gender roles that took five minutes to complete.

### *Materials*

All participants completed a questionnaire containing their demographic and the Development and Psychometric properties Gender roles Attitude Scale (Frize et al, 2003; Khalid 2004; Tougas 1995; Uji et al. 2006). Studies of gender role in several countries were used to develop this scale and experts from different disciplines contributed to the analyses of the scale and the final instrument used for its validity

and reliability (Zeyneloglu, 2011). The first page of the survey consists of 6 items. These items provide information on several demographic variables such as gender (male or female), age, and marital status, number of children and hours of work. The second page contained an 8-item scale that was developed to determine university students' attitudes towards gender roles in a 5-point Likert type scale. The traditional attitude sentences regarding gender roles were scored as 5 points for 'completely agree', 4 points for 'agree', 3 points for 'undecided', 2 points for 'disagree' and 1 point for 'absolutely disagree'. The higher scores from the scale showed that the students had more egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles and the lower scores indicated that the students' attitudes were more traditional. The scale consists of eight specific questions on traditional gender roles.

### *Procedure*

Students from different department in one college were chosen using a size-proportional stratified random sampling method; and a total of 100 students (56 females and 44 males) were included in the sample. The researcher collected data between January and February 2013. The scale was administered during breaks in classes. Participants were given brief information on what the study was about and that Nigerians only were needed to fill in the questionnaires. Participants were told that they did not need to identify themselves and that they did not have to take part in the survey if they did not want to. It was also necessary to assure the participants of their answers being strictly confidential. Some participants took longer than others to complete the questionnaire, but in general it took between 5-7 minutes to complete. The researcher made sure to give the participant's his/her private space when filling in

the questionnaire but at the same time close enough to answer whatever queries may arise. Upon receiving the responses, participants were thanked. The participants were found in the three college campuses of Dublin Business School. Data was later recorded, total scores computed and analysed using SPSS.

#### *Ethical considerations*

The University Ethics Committee approved the study; the research project supervisor and head of social science research projects reviewed the questionnaire. The information on the questionnaire given to the participants showed what the research was about which included participation to be entirely voluntary, confidentiality and anonymity to be maintained. Students that took part in the research were all over 18 years of age and consented to taking part on their own.

#### *Data analysis*

The total number of students who filled out the survey questionnaire was 100. From these 100, 56 were females and 44 were males. This uneven representation of gender is very important because of the potential effect it will have on the result. SPSS18 software was used which all the data had been imputed to make it possible to be analysed. Each variable was assigned a value in order to enter the data into an SPSS program. For instance, gender was coded as a dummy variable and given two values so that „1’ represents male and „2’ represents female. To understand the results obtained, several statistical analyses were conducted. The first step was obtaining the primary results. For example, the number of men and women who participated is showed as well as their age, marital status and hours of work. Such information is important in order to get a good picture of who the participants are. The other part of

the study shows the overall score obtained by each participant. For each participant, a sum of all items was reached by adding up the score on each item. That means with 8 items regarding gender role attitude scale of '1' to '5', the lowest possible score a participant can get is '8' and the highest score is '40'.

Furthermore, adding up 'strongly agree and agree' in one category and also summing up 'strongly disagree and disagree' on another category presented results of the attitudinal survey. This scale is designed to show the proportion of students who 'agree' compared to 'disagree' for each of the items. Results showed the mean total of both gender and the total scores on the scales.

## Results

Table 1 *Gender distribution*

	Frequency	Percent
Male	44	44.0%
Female	56	56.0%
Total	100	100%

Table 1 shows the distribution of men and women in this study. As shown in the table, 44% were male and 56% were female out of a total of 100 participants. This means that a higher number of women filled out the survey. This sample reveals that a higher number of women participated in the study than men.

## Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 *Marital Statuses*

	Frequency	Percent
Single	40	40.0%
Married	55	55.0%
Co-habiting	4	4.0%
Other	1	1.0%
Total	100	100%

Table 2 illustrates that most of the participants are either married or single. There are very few people who are co-habiting and just one person is „other’.

*Demographic characteristics*

The present data obtained a sample of 100 participants. In the examination of the students' demographic characteristics; it was determined that their mean age was 33.82 years (SD 8.74); 56.0 percent of the students were female and 44.0 percent were male. In relation to the age range sample, the minimum age was 18 years and the maximum age was 55 years. The marital status was 40.0 percent for single, 55.0 for married, 4.0 percent was for co-habiting and 1.0 percent was other. Further more, 25 percent had no children, 13 percent had 1 child, 25 percent had 2 children, 13 percent had 3 children, 16 percent had 4 children, 7 percent has 5 children and only 1.0 percent had 6 children; from this number 2 people were expecting a child/children. In relation to how many children the participants have, only 46.0 percent worked full time, 32 percent worked part time and 22 percent were not working at all.

Table 3 *Attitudinal scores for Men and Women*

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Totalgenderole	Male	44	21.5682	7.72311
	Female	56	25.9643	7.40261

Table 3 shows results that were obtained by adding the sum of all items for each participant. As was explained in the previous section, there were 8 items regarding attitudes towards gender roles with a scale of „1' to '5', the lowest possible score for each respondent is 8 and the highest is 40. In addition, a lower score indicates that the respondent has more traditional gender role attitude, while a higher

score indicates less traditional gender role attitude. To make sure that the scores were consistent, the positive items were recoded so that when a respondent „strongly agrees’ with a positive item, his or her score is ‘5’. That means if a student „strongly agrees’ on all 8 items, 5 (8), his or her score will equal =40. This means that a more egalitarian attitude (non traditional) is obvious when overall score is closer to 40 and a traditional attitude is indicated when a student’s overall score is closer to 20. Thus, Table 3 shows that among males, the mean score is 21.5; unlike females mean score of 25.9. This signifies that men have more traditional gender role attitudes than women

Table 4 *Overall Attitudinal results*

	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
<b>Survey Items</b>	Frequency	Frequency
The head of the household is a man	79	15
A man’s main task in the house is breadwinning	64	18
Women should not work if the economic situation of the man is adequate	37	54
Professions adopted by men and women should be different	31	49
Men should be preferred in employment applications over women	24	62
A girl should obey her father’s wishes	43	37
Men should deal with tasks away from home such as shopping and paying bills	38	44
Girls should be dressed in pink while boys should be dressed in blue	30	57
<b>Total</b>	<b>346</b>	<b>336</b>

The results in Table 4 were attained by designing a scale that combined „strongly agree’ and „agree’ in one category, while „disagree and „strongly disagree’ were merged into another category. The scale allows us to see the proportion of

students who agreed with each statement, compared to the number of students that disagreed. It is interesting to see that 15 participants out of 100 disagreed that „the head of the household is a man’, yet 79 people agreed to that statement. This is followed by 64 people agreeing that „A man’s main task in the house is breadwinning’ compared to just 18 people disagreeing with the statement. These numbers show that although some participants are comfortable with the idea of both men and women earning a living and having equal status, the vast majority of the students are still not ready to give up, question or challenge men as „breadwinners’ and „head of households’. “This is probably because of the increase of women’s participation in education and workforce, which adds a new level to their status without changing the cultural norm that gives men the sole task of providing” (Inaterama, 2006, p.65)

Another significant result from this table is that although 31 people agreed „that women should not work if the man’s income is adequate’ and 37 people agreed that „men and women’s profession should be different’, more people (54 and 49 respectively) disagreed with these statements. This result suggest that while participants support the idea of women doing different jobs to men and women staying at home if there is not a financial worry, a significant amount of respondents (mostly women) disagree with this statement. They consider women to be able to pursue other interests. Thus, the numbers above show an interesting contradiction, considering the fact that on one hand a higher number of respondents agreed to the fact that „A girl should obey her father’s wishes’, yet, on another hand, 62 people disagreed that „men should be preferred in employment over women’. It might be that it is probably easier to support theoretical ideas of opportunity and freedom (abstract) instead of putting them into practice, as this can be a potential threat.

Table 5 *Attitudinal Results by Gender*

	<b>Male Agree</b>		<b>Female Agree</b>	
<b>Survey Item</b>	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
The head of the household is a man	39	88.6%	40	71.4%
A man's main task in the house is breadwinning	32	72.7%	32	57.1%
Women should not work if the economic situation of the man is adequate	19	43.1%	17	30.3%
Professions adopted by men and women should be different	18	40.9%	13	23.2%
Men should be preferred in employment applications over women	13	29.5%	11	19.6%
A girl should obey her father's wishes	22	50%	21	37.4%
Men should deal with tasks away from home such as shopping and paying bills	19	43.1%	19	33.9%
Girls should be dressed in pink while boys should be dressed in blue.	14	31.8%	16	28.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>		<b>169</b>	

Table 5 shows results obtained by using the scale to evaluate the proportion of men and women who „agreed’ with individual item in the survey. In all eight items, a substantial number of men (even though there were fewer men that participated in the survey) agreed more with traditional gender role scale attitudes than women. This gender-based difference can be clearly seen in Table 3, although an equal number of

men and women agree that „A man’s main task is breadwinning’. The demographic characteristics above clearly indicated the reason for this, as 78% of the respondents (men and women) reported to be working either full-time or part-time. This means that an equal amount of men and women are in support of both gender to contribute to family income, however, we should bear in mind that there are more women in this survey than men. Therefore, as the table shows, 72% of men as supposed to 57% of women „agreed’ that it is the man who is mainly responsible for „breadwinning’. Similarly, in item 3, 4 and 5, men consistently showed a high preference for women to have a natural role in family and society and not compete. 43% of men think that women should not work if finances are adequate compared to 30% of women. These figures show that there are a greater proportion of men who want women to stay home. This could be as a result of origin country having already shaped the ideologies of first generation immigrants, especially men, as they are harder to convert to egalitarian views.

#### *T-test.*

Hypothesis one predicted that there will be a difference between the traditional gender role attitudes of men to that of women. A t-test was conducted with gender as the grouping variable; the t-test was then executed to find out if the difference between the mean attitudinal score for men and the mean attitudinal score for women was statistically significant. The mean score for men was 21.56 (SD=7.72) and for women was 25.96 (SD=7.40), the result of the t-test showed a probability of .005,  $t = 2892$ ,  $DF = (98)$ ,  $P < .005$ : as the result indicates the data to be less than  $P < 0.5$ , the null hypothesis that the result is a random one or because of chance is rejected. In conclusion, there is a significant difference between the mean scores for men and

mean scores for women. This means that mean scores for women is significantly higher than that of men. T-test, therefore confirms that women hold more egalitarian gender role views than men.

Hypothesis two: As Nigeria is a more traditional society than Ireland; hypothesis two predicted that there would be a difference between the number of women who work and the number of men working. The result of the t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the number of men and women, who work,  $t(111) = -.0178, p > .05$ . Mean score for men was 1.75 (SD=. 810) and the Mean scores for women are 1.76 (SD=. 786), this indicates that Mean scores for men are not significantly higher than women's score; the hypothesis was rejected.

## Discussion

The aim of this research was to establish if Nigerian students in a college in Ireland had more traditional gender role attitude or egalitarian gender role attitudes. The research also investigated the difference in gender role attitudes of males and females. This section will discuss the findings of the research results including differences, similarities of the data.

The first hypothesis was predicted that there would be a difference between the number of men and women who worked. The t-test result showed that there was no significant difference between how the number of men and women who worked, Mean hours of work for male is 1.75 (SD= .810) and Mean hours of work for women is 1.76 (SD= .787). The significance on the t- test was  $t(111) = -.0178, p > .05$ . This result is interesting and corresponds with the scale that asked „Women should not work if the economic situation of the man is adequate’, which showed only 17 out of 56 respondents of women agreeing. This result indicates that women think differently when it comes to earning a living for them and being financially independent, even though that the data showed that many of the women were not only married, but had children. The overall number of respondents without children was only 25 %, while the rest had between 1 and 6 children, 25 % was also the majority of respondents with 2 children and 2 respondents were pregnant. According to a report by Employment studies (1995) economic activity of women has risen over the past 20 years, while that of men has declined, furthermore, women with dependent children are more likely to be working than not working unlike the 1970’s which notably had a difference between women with children and other women in terms of their labour market behaviour. This increase in the number of women in paid work can be attributed to the rise of part-time work (93% was the total increase in part- time work for women’s

employment). This increase and importance in part-time work can be seen in the amount of respondents working on a part-time basis 32 out of 78 people.

The second hypothesis predicted that female and male students would differ in their traditional gender role attitudes. In line with this prediction, female students scored higher in traditional gender attitudes, Mean =21.56 (SD=7.72) for male and 25.96 (SD=7.40) for female, indicating that many of them disagreed on traditional gender role. On one hand, it is claimed that male immigrants especially from traditional societies have an attitude of monitoring their women in order to retain traditional values and norms. Therefore, immigrant women adopting new ideas are not only as a result of exposure to new beliefs and culture but because of interests (Bolzendahl & Meyers, 2004). Thus, immigrant females (Women and daughters) would be more enticed to embrace egalitarian beliefs than men, as women have more to gain (e.g., freedom) as supposed to men who might think that they will lose their status as the head. This rise and continuous increase of gender-egalitarianism in third world countries such as Nigerians in Ireland, can be attributed to level of education for women; this can be seen in the present findings were all female participants were in third level education; this is also linked to more female students that were found to participate in the study.

In Table 4, which stated that „the head of the household is a man’, men scored higher in „completely agree’ and lowest on „completely disagree’, 88.6% of men agreed and 71.4% of women agreed. Although higher than that of females, it indicates a large number of women still hold a good bit of their traditional gender roles „as man being the head of the household’, Mean=1.89 (SD=1.34). This hold to traditional gender role beliefs could still be seen in Table 5 that showed the „attitude of breadwinning role as a man’s task’, were women scored a lower than the men on

traditional role. Mean=2.17 (SD=1.31), 79.5 % of men agreed and 57.1% of women agreed. This result is interesting as the data result shows that there was no significant difference in the number of men and women working, 46.0 % worked full time, 32.0 % worked part time and only 22.0 % did not work, the mean hours of work for men was 1.75 (SD=. 810) and the mean score for women was 1.76 (SD=. 786). The two items refers to more traditional family arrangements that are related to ‚gender-essentialism‘, which enacts on ‚intensive fatherhood‘ role (Cotter et al, 2011), that places a strong importance on values relating to identity of immigrants. According to Pyke (p. 542) ‚Egalitarian masculinity may not be appreciated by wives who view it as a threat to their feminine identity‘, especially upper-class women who expect their husbands to go up on the career ladder and live up to the role of the breadwinner (Pyke, 1996). Suggestions made by Silberschmidt (2001) explains that socio-economic changes in rural Kenya have led to the situation where men can no longer perform the duties and responsibilities that they identify with as breadwinner and head of households. Thus, they suffer from feelings of inadequacy and lack of self-esteem (Silberschmidt, 2001; p.657). Further analysis on the scale of ‚women not working if the economic situation of the man is adequate‘ indicated that although women are traditional in some ways, they are also beginning to think differently, the mean score was 3.32 (SD=1.52), 43.2 % of men agree and 30.4% of women agreed. The scale ‚Professions adopted by men and women should be different‘ showed a mean score of 3.37 (SD=1.50), 40.9 % of men agree and 23.2 % of women agree. ‚Men should be preferred in employment applications over women‘ showed the mean score of 3.66 (SD=1.49), 29.5% of men agreed and 19.6 % of women agreed. ‚A girl should obey her father’s wishes‘ showed that 50.0 % of men agreed and 37.5 % of women agreed, mean score was 2.99 (SD=1.45). The scale, which clearly tests the differences in men

and women's tasks „Men should deal with tasks away from home such as shopping and paying bills' showed that 43.2 % of men agree and 33.9 % of women agree with a mean score of 3.18 (SD=1.45). The final scale which tested how men and women should dress „Girls should be dressed in pink while boys should be dressed in blue' showed that 18.2 % of men were undecided about the issue while women were more certain with a result that showed only 8.9 % undecided; although 31.8 % of men agreed and only 28.6 % of women agree. Mean score was 3.45 (SD=1.45).

These results show that although a large number of students hold egalitarian gender role belief in all items, more traditional gender role attitudes are imbibed within ideologies that are related to core gender roles attached to norms and traditions of Nigerian students. The overall result of the quantitative research indicate that a bigger number of the entire participant still believe that women should come second place for opportunities outside the home; the division of labour has been naturally placed where they belong. Equality is possible and achievable as long as the women and men have stable control of over their individual domain.

The overall result of this study showed that students scored higher on the traditional gender role attitude scale meaning that there were a high percentage of Nigerian students attending Dublin Business School who have traditional gender role attitudes. An independent test was conducted to show if the students had more traditional gender role attitude, the test indicated a significant result on the students; traditional gender role attitudes were high among Nigerian students in Ireland. Research on gender role attitudes in European countries on immigrants suggests that cohort replacement is an important factor in changing to egalitarian gender role beliefs (Roder, 2012). This means exposing gender ideologies and experiences on youths (malleable years) have lasting influence on traditional gender role beliefs in

their adult years (Alwin & Krosnick, 1991). Acculturation and assimilation of immigrants to a host country also increases by generational succession (Alba & Nee, 2003) as families and children of immigrant are influenced by education, media peer socialization and culture consumption (Thomson & Crul, 2007). This supports the results that show that all of the participants were adults with a mean age of 33.8 (SD=8.74), minimum age was 18 years and maximum age was 55 years (N=100)

#### *Limitations and further research*

This study has several limitations. The scale's validity and reliability study was only implemented with 100 college students studying in Dublin Business School. This scale should be used in other colleges, institutions and the general Nigerian population in Ireland were individuals of different age and educational groups would be found. As the scale was only used for Nigerians students living in Ireland, it will make more sense to also use this scale for Nigerians living in Nigeria, as this will give more accurate information of present attitudes towards gender roles. This will show whether there is a significant difference of gender role attitudes between those living in the Nigerian society and those living in the Irish society. A longitudinal research will also determine whether living in Ireland is related to change of gender role attitude, especially from traditional to egalitarian. Furthermore, this scale should be used in studies examining people's gender role. This study will make a significant contribution to this subject field, as there are little or no data on immigrants, especially Nigerians in Ireland, on gender role attitudes. In this respect, by determining the attitudes of the college students towards gender roles would make a small but important contribution to integrate more egalitarian view to university education. This should also encourage development on precautions for gender

discrimination with announcement of research results in scientific communities and future research.

## Conclusion

This study was designed to investigate gender role attitudes among Nigerian students in a Dublin college in Ireland. Some of the questions pondered on in this research were: the gender role attitude of Nigerian students, whether egalitarian or traditional and if there are differences between gender role attitudes between men and women. To answer these questions, a quantitative method was used to gather data that measured size to which Nigerian men and women hold traditional and egalitarian gender role attitudes.

In addition, a desired end-point of this research was to add to the body of research that has been done on gender role attitudes of Nigerians in general. Furthermore, other research on gender role attitudes have argued that attitudes on gender are influenced and even shaped by the people we associate and socialize with, education and marital status.

Although the results in research cannot be used to generalise the attitudes of other immigrants, Africans or Nigerian immigrants in general because of the small amount of sample used, the results that can be seen above have expanded our understanding of the difficulty Nigerian men and women experience as they make efforts to express themselves clearly and effectively their own point of view in terms of what is masculine or feminine in fitting their cultural norms and present circumstances.

An important challenge in measuring and examining gender role attitudes is the fact that not only is it always changing, but it could be affected by a number of factors and vice versa (behaviour also influences attitudes). Bearing this in mind, future research should combine both quantitative and qualitative research as well as longitudinal.

Overall, this research has supplied important information concerning gender role attitudes. The survey data showed and confirmed that people are constantly „doing gender’ according to Zimmerman and West notion and argument of gender that is constantly being reinforced. For example, the majority of students agreed that a man is the head of the household. Similarly, most men also agreed that a man’s main task is breadwinning and that women should not work if the economic situation of the man is adequate. In order to understand these ideologies, Greenstein (1996), mentioned that the division of household responsibilities is shaped by every individual’s gender ideology. For example, if a man is socialized to believe that women should do different and separate duties, he will not become aware or conscious of the fact that restriction of desired responsibility is inequality. Men agree for women to participate in duties that do not naturally belong to them such as working to earn money for the family when it is considered to be an extra income (supplement) and not as a main responsibility as long as it does not endanger the authority and superiority of men in the home (Wikkie, 1993).

On top of everything else, some studies still argue that as an increasing number of women have a portion of ‚breadwinning role’ in the home, there will be a general tendency for the rise of egalitarian gender role attitudes in the household (Zuo and Tang, 2000). Regrettably, this study clearly shows that there is a powerful opposition to women’s advancement of knowledge and financial independence because it may threaten men’s governing, ruling and controlling place in the household.

While a quantitative data result suggest that participants in general have traditional gender role attitudes and also that female participants have more egalitarian gender role attitudes than male participants, a qualitative result will

indicate if gender role attitudes are shaped by circumstances; the fear of men losing their financial authority in the home will be examined. Similarly, although the sum of female participants' attitudes indicate egalitarian views, the results show that a good number of women still hold conservative views on gender role or are unsure. The results also show how they resist to male domination in questions such as „a girl should obey her father's wishes' which most female participants disagreed on. Thus this veiled resistance of women leads to gender role attitudes being too complex for categorization as to whether more men or women are traditional or egalitarian.

Participants can have a traditional gender role view in one context, unsure in another or hold an egalitarian view in a different item. Possibly, one can conclude that Nigerian men and women studying in a Dublin college in Ireland have gender role attitudes that both support and reject traditional gender roles at the same time. In spite of that, these students will continue to be restricted by the norms and beliefs of their culture, even though their view of gender role is also influenced by other important factors. Gender, marital status, educational background, number of children, family support networks and social networks all influence how an individual defines the way masculinity and femininity should work.

Handling matters concerning gender inequality in Third world countries such as Nigeria is both an important and sensitive matter as their cultures are centred on old and conservative traditions that withstand anything that has to do with change, especially because „change' might signify being polluted and tainted by „westernisation' (Narayan, 1997). Consequently, holding onto traditional gender roles preserves national identity and cultural pride. As was said in the literature review, Nigeria is trying to promote gender equality, although this process is slow, the

discussion is the basis of acting upon it. Unfortunately, this process will even become stagnant if gender roles in the family do not change for the better.

The general result of this research shows that separating gender roles is a huge part of how people are socialized. Therefore, any introductory act or step to combat gender role inequality should first of all start from the way young children are reared by the people around them such as family, friends, peers, teachers, schools and society as a whole. Okeke-Ihejirika (2004:178) argues that education in Nigeria should promote critical thinking to help children ask questions such as “Is culture stagnant”? Do things have to remain the way they are without any reason? Should tradition serve us or must we serve tradition”? These questions and direction of thinking are very important as they stand up to gender bias and discrimination.

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## Appendix

### *Survey Questionnaire*

#### Gender attitudes among Nigerians living in Ireland

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study, which is, concerned about gender role attitudes among Nigerians living in Ireland, whether it is traditional or egalitarian. By answering the questions below, you are playing an important role in acquiring more knowledge about Nigerians living in Ireland. Please take a few minutes to read the questions carefully, then answer and return the survey. Any information that you give will remain strictly confidential. You are not required to write your name anywhere on this survey. I hope you find this survey interesting. Thank you for your time and co-operation.

Please complete all questions

1. Age:
2. Gender: Male Female
3. Marital status: Single Married Divorced Co-habiting

Other

4. Number of Children:
5. Are you Pregnant/expecting? Yes No
6. How many hours do you work?

Full-time (30 hours a week and more)

Part-time (Less than 30 hours per week)

Not working

Instructions: On the next page are listed a number of statements on traditional gender roles. Please read each of them and indicate how you feel on the scale.

1= Completely Agree 2= Agree 3= Undecided 4= Disagree 5= Absolutely disagree

A. The head of the household is a man

1 2 3 4 5

B. A man's main task in the house is breadwinning.

1 2 3 4 5

C. Women should not work if the economic situation of the man is adequate.

1 2 3 4 5

D. Professions adopted by men and women should be different.

1 2 3 4 5

E. Men should be preferred in employment applications over women

1 2 3 4 5

F. A girl should obey her father's wishes.

1 2 3 4 5

G. Men should deal with tasks away from home such as shopping and paying bills.

1 2 3 4 5

H. Girls should be dressed in pink while boys should be dressed in blue.

1 2 3 4 5

Thank you for your co-operation.

If you require further assistance concerning this research, please contact either my phone number 0868436597 and e-mail o1431580@dbs.com or my project supervisor Dr Shakeel Siddiqui, shakeel.siddiqui@dbs.com