



GENDER PERCEPTION OF FAMILY INHERITANCE AND OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY IN IGBO LAND

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Abstract

This study investigates the persistent gender perceptions influencing family inheritance and property ownership in contemporary Igbo society, Nigeria, with emphasis on Owerri West L.G.A in Imo State, Nigeria. Anchored on the symbolic interactionism theory, this study employed the qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured interviews with 12 purposively sampled participants (6 men, 6 women) across four communities in Owerri West L.G.A., Imo State. Data was analyzed thematically. The study found that gendered inheritance practices persist to a large extent. Analysis revealed four key themes: the widespread persistence of male favoritism; the cultural rationale for privileging sons as heirs; the role of patriarchal norms in maintaining the status quo, and the enabling factors of greed, social pressure, and ignorance. The research demonstrates that discriminatory inheritance practices are upheld by a complex interplay of culture, economics, and social coercion. It argues that promoting gender equity requires moving beyond legal solutions to include grassroots educational campaigns and community-led initiatives aimed at reshaping deep-seated cultural perceptions.

Keywords: Gender Perception, Inheritance Rights, Patrilineal Custom, Cultural Norms, Imo State, Igbo Land

Introduction

In a quiet compound in Umuchu, a woman we will call Ifeoma watches as her brothers divide the vast lands of their late father. As the only daughter who cared for him in his old age, she receives a 'compensation' of a single plot, not as a right, but as a gift. This scene, replicated across Anambra, Imo State and much of Igboland, encapsulates the deep-seated gender perceptions that govern family inheritance. Despite Nigeria's ratification of international conventions like CEDAW, the lived reality for many Igbo women is still defined by a patrilineal system that systematically excludes them from economic power. The topic of gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property is a complex and multifaceted topic that has significant cultural and social implications. The Igbo people of Nigeria have a unique cultural and social system that shapes their perception of inheritance and property ownership, and this system as noted by Ogueri (2022) is said to be influenced by gender roles and expectations.

According to Okolo (2017), family inheritance and property ownership in Igbo land are traditionally passed down through male lineage, with sons inheriting the family property and carrying on the family name. This cultural tradition reflects a patriarchal system that values male authority and power.

However, in recent years, there has been a growing awareness of the need to address gender inequality and promote gender equity in Igbo society. Scholars like Obiyo (2021) assert that gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo Land is influenced by a range of factors, including cultural beliefs, social norms, economic factors, legal frameworks among others. For example, in some parts of Igbo land, women are not allowed to inherit property or have limited rights to property ownership. This reflects cultural beliefs that women are inferior to men and should not have the same rights and privileges as men. However, in other parts of Igbo Land, women are allowed to inherit property and have equal rights to property ownership. This reflects a growing awareness of the need to promote gender equity and address gender inequality in Igbo society.

Generally, the subject of gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo land is a complex issue that requires further research and analysis. There is a need to investigate the factors that shape gender roles and perceptions in Igbo society and identify strategies for promoting gender equity and addressing gender inequality. This could involve developing legal frameworks that protect the rights of women to inherit property and own property, promoting education and awareness-raising campaigns to challenge cultural beliefs and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality, and supporting women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship.

While scholars like Mbanu (2020) argue that modernization has eroded these traditional practices, this study, through qualitative data from Owerri West L.G.A., reveals a more complex and persistent reality. It argues that gender perception in inheritance is not merely fading away but is being maintained by a powerful interplay of cultural nostalgia, economic anxiety, and social coercion.

Problem statement

In a typical Igbo culture, there seems to be an extreme form of stereotypical disposition against women especially in the aspect of family inheritance and ownership of properties. This disposition perpetuates gender inequality and economic marginalization of women. Many scholars like Okolo, Okafor, and Eze (2017) have recorded that traditionally, inheritance and property ownership in Igbo land are passed down through male lineage, with sons inheriting the family property and carrying on the family name. By implication therefore, such tradition speculates a patriarchal system that values and gives more recognition to the male gender, while marginalizing women and limiting their access to family inheritance and ownership of properties.

Most unfortunately, this problem seems to be compounded by laws, cultural beliefs and social norms that reinforce such gender roles and expectations in Igbo culture, and such factors further limit women's access to property ownership and inheritance. This therefore implies that women are excluded from land ownership and inheritance, which perpetuates a cycle of poverty and economic marginalization. Although many scholars like Mbanu (2020) have argued that such inequalities have long been overtaken by development and civilization, however other scholars like Okolo et al., (2017) have strongly maintained that such gender inequalities still persists even in contemporary Igbo society.

The disparity in the opinions of scholars have thus necessitated this study that is set to provide valid responses to pressing questions like to what extent does gender perception influence family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo Land?

Thus, the study is embarked upon to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent does gender perception in family inheritance and ownership of properties persist in contemporary Igbo society?

2. Which of the genders gets more favoured in the system of family inheritance and ownership of properties in Igbo land?
3. Why does the particular gender get more favoured in the system of family inheritance and ownership of properties more than the other?
4. What are the factors that necessitate gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo Land?

The above raised questions are significant because findings will be relevant for policy makers and development practitioners who are keen on tackling gender inequality in society. It will also be of immense relevance to legal practitioners who deal on women's rights. Again, this study could support or refute certain theoretical frameworks that concern and explain how gender inequality is perpetuated in some cultures. Academically, this study is relevant because it will contribute to literature and academic discourse on gender, culture and property ownership in Africa and especially in Igbo land.

Literature Review

Gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo Land

The scholarly conversation on this topic can be grouped into several key perspectives. First, the Traditionalist View, as detailed by Okolo et al. (2017), establishes that the Igbo people of Nigeria have a unique cultural and social system that shapes their perception of inheritance and property ownership, and this system is often influenced by gender roles and perceptions and expectations. It is worthy of note that in Igbo land, family inheritance and property ownership are traditionally passed down through male lineage, with sons inheriting the family property and carrying on the family name. This cultural tradition reflects a patriarchal system that values male authority and power.

Conversely, a Revisionist or Modernist View has emerged. Scholars like Mbanu (2020) point to a growing awareness of the need to address gender inequality and promote gender equity in Igbo society, noting that in some parts of Igbo land, women are allowed to inherit property and have equal rights to property ownership.

A third perspective focuses on the Mechanisms of Perpetuation. It is a widely held belief that gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo land is influenced by a range of factors, including cultural beliefs, social norms, economic factors, legal frameworks among others. For example, in some parts of Igbo land, women are not allowed to inherit property or have limited rights to property ownership, and such situation as noted by Obiyo (2021), is a reflection that the cultural beliefs that women are inferior to men and should not have the same rights and privileges as men.

Various postulations however surround the issue of gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo land, and the complexity of this matter has called for further research and analysis. There is also a need to examine the cultural and social factors that shape gender roles and perceptions in Igbo society and identify strategies for promoting gender equity and addressing gender inequality. This could involve developing legal frameworks that protect the rights of women to inherit property and own property, promoting education and awareness-raising campaigns to challenge cultural beliefs and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality, and supporting women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship.

While existing literature ably describes the *'what'* of these practices, there is less qualitative, ground-level analysis on the *how* and *why* they persist in contemporary communities. This study seeks to

fill that gap by giving voice to the lived experiences and rationalizations of community members in Owerri West L.G.A.

Gender perception and inequalities in Igbo culture

In African culture, there are various stereotypes and gender roles accorded to each gender in society. Also, laws in African society are firmly rooted in cultural beliefs of the people (Obiyo, 2021). For instance in Igbo culture, men are regarded as the heads of families and are being trained for leadership roles, while women are trained mostly for marital purposes. Consequently, such perception in gender roles has brought about marginalization in various situations like family inheritance and then resultant conflicts in some families, owing to the fact that women are taken for granted, even in their own family settings (Mbanu, 2020).

Traditionally, in Igbo culture, these gender roles and perceptions have often placed women in subordinate positions, where they are regarded as inferior to men. Such perceptions ultimately result in severe gender inequalities against the women (Dikeocha, 2019). Gender inequality is a situation where one gender is rated higher than the other, and this often times make the other gender vulnerable, and can also lead to low self-esteem. Such gender inequality even affects marital relationships and in most cases have severe consequences on women (Ogbonna, 2018). Although civilization seems to have taken place in society, some communities in Igbo land still practice gender inequality, where daughters' hands are even give out to marriage to pay debts and sometimes just to acquire mere material possessions; but either way, this has negative impacts and consequences on women which include domestic violence, low self-esteem, poor mental health and in severe cases death (Uzoma, 2018).

According to Obiora (2017), "...in Igbo culture, gender inequality seems to be common because since time immemorial that is the inherent practice of the people, and such practice has been passed down from generation to generation". Undeniably also, Ogoke (2020) adds that some other inhumane passed down traditions which were practiced before they were abolished like widowhood practices and sacrifices of virgins; women are mostly the victims of such ill treatments.

With the foregoing, Ejike (2021) asserts that gender perception and inequality has negative consequences on women's mental health in the sense that it often makes a good number of women to be regarded as slaves where they are tasked to taking care of the house chores, cooking for the husband, taking care of the kids and performing other domestic functions with little or no assistance from the men. Compared to some other cultures across the globe also, Omiye (2016) records that the Igbo people have a different view of how women should be treated, and this perception in most cases decide the fate of the women. A good number of women have therefore been recorded to feel irrelevant and unwanted, and such feelings can cause anxiety, depression and might even result in suicide. More so, it has been observed that the men who are often regarded as the heads of families, make rash decisions, and whether such decisions are right or wrong, women are expected to adhere to it. Women are therefore seen as nothing valuable but mere housewives; they are to have no say in the affairs of the home (Onyeka, 2015).

Many scholars like (Amanze, Ezenna&Enyeribe, 2021) have recorded that gender perception in Igbo land is a misinterpreted cultural belief of roles women ought to play, it limits them to certain goals and achievements a woman can acquire, and a good number of communities have failed to make things right. Ofoegbu, (2018) adds that most of these women have dreams that get faded away and this leave them with nothing to own up to; and as bad as it gets, the belief points out lame reasons why women should be controlled, such belief also posits that it is pointless training a female child, since she ends up getting married, and changing her name

Furthermore, the gender perceptions in almost all communities in Igbo society go as far as holding that women have no rights in the inheritance or ownership of properties. Even when a woman decides to improve on herself and make a living for herself, it is perceived that such woman is attempting to play the role of a man, and such attitude and behavior is frowned at by members of society. To them, a woman's life revolves around her husband (Uzoechi, 2016).

Conclusively, gender perception and inequality of genders is a societal problem that needs urgent attention before it leads to uncontrollable crisis in society, and relevant authorities are expected to tackle this anomaly because of the negative impact it has in society.

The impact of culture and tradition on gender perception of inheritance and proposal ownership in Igbo Land

In Igbo Land, cultural traditions and social norms have a significant impact on gender perceptions of inheritance and property ownership. The traditional patrilineal system of inheritance in Igbo Land reflects a patriarchal culture that values male authority and power, while marginalizing women and limiting their access to property ownership (Okolo, Okafor, & Eze, 2017). Under this system, sons inherit the family property and carry on the family name, while daughters are often excluded from inheritance and property ownership. Unfortunately however, Obiyo (2021) notes that this cultural tradition perpetuates gender inequality and economic marginalization of women, and also limits their access to economic resources and opportunities in Igbo land and beyond.

Corroborating the foregoing, Emejulu and Onwuka (2018) add that the patrilineal system of inheritance in Igbo land significantly affects women's access to land ownership, which is a key source of economic power and social status in many communities, as women are excluded from land ownership and inheritance; it perpetuates a cycle of poverty and economic marginalization. More so, this problem is compounded by cultural beliefs and social norms that reinforce gender roles and expectations, which further limit women's access to property ownership and inheritance. Although, Nwankwo and Eze (2020) note that there are variations in the extent of gender inequality in inheritance and property ownership across different communities in Igbo land. Some communities allow women to inherit property and have equal rights to property ownership, while others discriminate against women and limit their access to property ownership; but altogether, the extent of gender inequality in inheritance and property ownership in Igbo land is shaped by cultural beliefs and social norms that vary across different communities. For example, Okafor (2019) found that cultural beliefs about women's inferiority to men and their role as caretakers of the home and family often limit women's access to property ownership and inheritance. Similarly, Emejulu and Onwuka (2018) found that the patrilineal system of inheritance in Igbo land is reinforced by cultural beliefs about the importance of male lineage and the need to preserve family wealth and status.

There is no gain saying that cultural beliefs and social norms perpetuate gender inequality and limit women's access to economic resources and opportunities, because the impact of culture and tradition on gender perception of inheritance and property ownership in Igbo land is also reflected in legal frameworks and policies. According to Nwankwo and Eze (2020), legal frameworks and policies related to inheritance and property ownership in Igbo land often reflect cultural beliefs and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality. For example, the Nigerian Land Use Act of 1978 gives the state control over all land in Nigeria, which has limited the ability of women to own land and inherit property (Okafor, 2019). Similarly, customary laws and practices related to inheritance and property ownership often prioritize male inheritance and property ownership, which further limits women's access to property ownership and inheritance (Emejulu & Onwuka, 2018).

Unfortunately, also, the impact of culture and tradition on gender perception of inheritance and property ownership in Igbo land is not limited to legal frameworks and policies. It is also reflected in social

norms and practices that reinforce gender roles and expectations, which limit women's access to property ownership and inheritance. For example, Okafor (2019) notes that social norms around marriage and divorce often limit women's ability to inherit property or own property in their own right. Similarly, Emejulu and Onwuka (2018) found that women are often excluded from land ownership and inheritance because of social norms that prioritize male inheritance and property ownership.

Admittedly, the impact of culture and tradition on gender perception of inheritance and property ownership in Igbo land has important implications for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. Women who are excluded from property ownership and inheritance have limited access to economic resources and opportunities, which perpetuates a cycle of poverty and economic marginalization. This problem not only affects women, but also has broader social and economic implications for Igbo society, as it limits the potential for economic growth and development (Obiyo 2021).

To address the impact of culture and tradition on gender perception of inheritance and property ownership in Igbo Land, legal and policy reforms are needed. These reforms could include legal frameworks that protect the rights of women to inherit property and to own property, as well as education and awareness-raising campaigns to challenge cultural beliefs and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality (Nwankwo & Eze, 2020). Additionally, reforms could include support for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship, which could help to break the cycle of poverty and economic marginalization that is perpetuated by gender inequality in inheritance and property ownership (Okolo, Okafor, & Eze, 2017).

Some scholars recommend engaging traditional and religious leaders in the process of promoting gender equity and challenging cultural beliefs and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality in inheritance and property ownership (Emejulu & Onwuka, 2018). Also, traditional and religious leaders are often influential in shaping cultural beliefs and social norms, and their support could be critical in promoting gender equity in Igbo Land. However, engaging traditional and religious leaders requires a nuanced approach that takes into account their own cultural beliefs and practices, as well as the need to promote gender equity and social justice.

In addition to legal and policy reforms, community-based interventions could also be effective in promoting gender equity in inheritance and property ownership in Igbo Land. These interventions could include education and awareness-raising campaigns that challenge cultural beliefs and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality, as well as support for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship (Okafor, 2019). Community-based interventions could also involve the establishment of women's groups and networks to provide a support system for women who are excluded from property ownership and inheritance (Nwankwo & Eze, 2020). These groups could provide women with information and resources on their legal rights to inheritance and property ownership, as well as support for economic activities and entrepreneurship.

Conclusively, the impact of culture and tradition on gender perception of inheritance and property ownership in Igbo Land is significant and has important implications for women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurship. Legal and policy reforms, education and awareness-raising campaigns, and community-based interventions could help to promote gender equity and address gender inequality in inheritance and property ownership in Igbo Land.

Theoretical framework

This study is hinged on the symbolic interactionism theory by George Herbert Mead (1934). Mead held that communication shapes our ideas, sense of who we are, and the larger society in which we inhabit. Mead concentrated on how individuals construct order and meaning in their daily interactions through symbolic interaction. (Douglas, 2018) The word "symbolic interaction" was first used by Herbert Blumer, who was

Mead's first student. He is credited as the creator of symbolic interaction as a result. The three fundamental tenets of symbolic interactionism, which deal with meaning, language, and mind, were outlined by Blumer in 1969. These assumptions lead to a conclusion on how a person develops their identity and integrates into a larger society (Gregory, 2021).

According to this theory, meaning is established through the use of language, and our interpretation of these symbols is altered by our mental process. Harold (2019) further adds that the symbolic interactionism theory holds that people react to aspects of their environments based on the personal meanings they assign to them, such as meanings that are produced and changed through interpersonal symbolic communication.

The theory is therefore pertinent to our study because there is a cultural consensus in Igbo culture that females are discriminated against when it comes to land inheritance, and so the girl child traditionally has no right to inherit land in Igbo culture. This lens allows us to analyze:

1. The Symbols: How are concepts like 'family lineage,' 'ofo,' 'Agunwanyị,' or 'compensation' symbolically constructed to mean different things for men and women?
2. The Interactions: How do family meetings, sharing ceremonies, and everyday conversations reinforce these meanings? (e.g., N4's description of women being excluded from even cooking the ritual cow).
3. The Interpretation: How do individuals (like N2 who uses the word 'compensation') interpret these symbols to justify and maintain the status quo, even when it contradicts modern legal principles?

Methodology

This study adopted qualitative research design. The population of the study comprised adults within four communities of Owerri West L.G.A Imo state (Umuguma, Irete, Avu and Nekede) no statistical formula was adopted in choosing the communities, they were simple chosen for convenience and manageability purposes. However, only five inhabitants from each of these communities (including elderly men and women and few young people like youth leaders) were purposively sampled. The main instruments used for the study was interview guide. The qualitative data collected through the interview guide was transcribed and analyzed using inductive analysis.

Results and Findings

In the course of this study, 12 interviewees were used for the study comprising of 6 males and 6 females. Besides addressing theoretical saturation according to Ojiakor-Umenze (2017), the equal number of male and female was to get a balanced representation from both gender, as the issue under study concerns both parties with far reaching consequences. Questions from the interview/ guide (GPFIOFIL) were adopted to provide responses from the interviewees. The interviewees were identified with the numbers N1- N12 as the case maybe and where necessary.

Themes

Four overarching themes emerged throughout the interviews. These were: extent of persistence of gender perception in family inheritance and ownership of properties in contemporary Igbo society; most favoured gender in distribution of family inheritance/ownership in Igboland; reasons for favoring a particular gender above the other; and factors that necessitate gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo Land. Words in brackets were added to some quoted material in order to clarify their meaning.

Extent of persistence of gender perception in family inheritance and ownership of properties in contemporary Igbo society

All the interviewees (N1-N12) in the first instance agreed that gender discrimination and sharing of family inheritance and ownership of properties persists in Igbo land. To buttress her point, N5 added that "...right from the olden days till this contemporary times, nothing seems to have changed in the patterns of sharing of land in our community and in my family particularly, it is only the men that are recognized and land or whatever it is, is shared among them".

N8 agrees to this and added that "...sometimes women are not even allowed to come close to the environment where the land is shared let alone benefiting from the sharing" N4 corroborating with N5, added that "...in our place for instance, when the men are sharing cow that was presented to them for the burial of their mgboto (Married daughter), or a departed aged man, women are forbidden from such gatherings. The men would kill the cow, prepare the pepper soup by themselves and dish it out by themselves without involving the women. So if they can segregate against women in such matter, how much more in land that is valued."

Meanwhile, N2 mentioned that "... actually in my own side gender perception still exists, in fact to a very great extent it does exist, but in my own family, we try to 'compensate' our women. The eldest man can decide to apportion a plot of land or two to all the women. They are to sell it and share the money among themselves. As compensation ooo (sic) not as a right"

Majority of the interviewees further added that even if a woman purchases the land by herself, or a very expensive property, there is a cynical way she is being regarded in society. Some regard her as Agunwanyi (the Tigress) or Ezenwanyi, and such names have negative connotations in Igbo land. Others have the perception that she got the funds from prostitution, or got it from a male sponsor.

Generally the interviewees acknowledged that gender perception in family inheritance and ownership of properties still exists in Igbo society. And it all slants in the favor of the males who seem to be more valued and respected in the Igbo society. Deducing therefore from the various responses gotten for this first research question, it has been found that to a large extent gender perception in family inheritance and ownership of properties persist in contemporary Igbo society.

Favouritism in distribution of family inheritance/ownership in Igboland

The belief in favouritism in distribution of family inheritance/ownership in Igboland was generally agreed by the entire interviewees. The interviewees maintained that the male child was more favoured in the system of family inheritance and ownership of properties in Igbo land. They unanimously posited that aside land, other properties of a family are still strictly reserved for the male child no matter how little the male child is. This is understandable as there exists a patriarchal system in many, if not all, communities in Igbo land. N9 for instance said "...i have four children 3 girls and a son. My son is the last born, can you believe that he has 2 plots of land to his name, but his elder sisters have nothing, not even a plot of land." This statement by N9 was agreed by the rest of the interviewees. N7 corroborates the foregoing and noted that "...when my wife was pregnant with my third children (twins), that was coincidentally when we were sharing land in the family. The day she gave birth she bore twins a girl and a boy. Land was given to the boy, but none for the girl, and the funniest part was that the exact number of plots I benefited was the same number he got too."

Other interviewees told similar stories and recalled similar experiences. Such stories and evidences point to the belief that favoritism largely exist in contemporary Igbo land in the distribution, and ownership of family inheritance. Deducing therefore from the data presented above and in response to the second

research question, it has been discovered that there is extreme favouritism in the distribution of family inheritance/ownership in Igbo land, and the male are the most favoured in this regards.

Reasons for favoring a particular gender above the other

The interviewees were asked why they think a particular gender get more favored in the system of family inheritance and ownership of properties more than the other. Various reasons were given, but the majority of the interviewees indicated that the cultural beliefs of the Igbo people plays the most significant role in this regards. The summary of their responses on the culture factor is that the Igbo culture has traditionally been patrilineal, with a strong emphasis on male lineage and the preservation of family heritage through male descendant, and so the interviewees believe that this deep-rooted cultural belief system perpetuates the notion that men are the natural heirs and owners of family properties.

Meanwhile, other reasons were given for this favouritism aside cultural beliefs. N12 mentioned that traditional gender roles and stereotypes in Igbo land are also one of the primary reasons for favoring a particular gender over the other. N6 supports this and explained that "... these factors seem to place a higher value on the contributions of men in terms of family lineage, leadership, and protection, and so these societal expectations create a bias towards male heirs as the preferred choice for inheriting family properties.

Also, N4 noted that "... it is almost impossible to overcome deeply ingrained cultural practices and beliefs. To even attempt it takes a lot of time and consistent effort. He explains that it requires not only changes in individual attitudes and behaviors but also a broader societal transformation". Relatively, in the words of N3, "...the persistence of favoritism can be attributed to the interplay of many factors like cultural, economic, and social factors that have shaped Igbo society for generations. Additionally, resistance to change and the fear of disrupting established norms can hinder progress towards more equitable practices."

In response to the third research question therefore, it has been found that there are several reasons for favoring a particular gender above the other in the system of family inheritance and ownership of properties Igbo land and these include but not limited to culture, socio-economic factors, traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

Factors that necessitate gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo Land.

The interviewees were asked to mention the factors that necessitate gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo Land. Their responses were almost similar and seem to revolve around two major factors which are the culture/traditional beliefs of the Igbo people and gender role/expectations;

To that regards, N6 explained that the males are largely regarded as the heirs of all family properties because they are the ones that carry on the family lineage and hold the ofo, and so they are expected to uphold ancestral traditions and responsibilities. He further adds that daughters may be excluded from inheritance (or receive a smaller share in some cases) due to the perception that their primary role lies in marriage and joining another family. N5 supports this position and mentions that some communities believe that giving land or property to a daughter is an indirect way of wishing her bad luck, because she is expected to leave her parent's house in marriage and be joined to a man; so giving her properties in her father's house is an indirect way of telling her "do not get married". N7 added that greed is another factor that can be considered. She explains that some men believe that giving properties to women will reduce the portion that they would ordinarily receive, and so they bank on that general notion of 'women do not get properties in their father's house' as the excuse they need to hinder the daughters from getting any shares.

Still on the traditional factors, N1 notes that fear of reproach and mockery by the kinsmen is a factor that can necessitate such gender perception. According to him, "...they call it omenaelu (taboo) in my place to see or hear that women are being given properties, or are sharing properties with the men, most especially land. The family that does that might face reproach and mockery for the rest of their lives; and so in order to avoid such situations they simply maintain the trend and deprive the women of any inheritance. N3 adds 'ignorance and lack of enlightenment' as another factor. She explains that "...it is unfortunate that these people don't know that we are now living in a civilized world, we are in 2023 for God's sake, and all these olden days mentality should have been erased and forgotten by now, but it is most unfortunate that many communities still hold on strongly on these archaic beliefs and traditions. This is why many of such communities are not enjoying development". The above are the summary of the major factors that necessitate gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo Land. In response to the fourth research question therefore, several factors have been found to necessitate gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo Land, and these include: cultural and traditional beliefs; greed; fear of reproach and mockery by kinsmen; ignorance and lack of enlightenment.

Summary

The study evaluated gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo land. Several questions were raised to provide data to meet the objectives of the study. It was therefore found that to a large extent, gender perception in family inheritance and ownership of properties persist in contemporary Igbo society. The study also found that there is extreme favouritism in the distribution of family inheritance/ownership in Igbo land, and the male are the most favoured in this regards.

Additionally, it was discovered that several reasons for favoring a particular gender above the other in the system of family inheritance and ownership of properties Igboland and these include but not limited to culture, socio-economic factors, traditional gender roles and stereotypes.

Lastly the study found that several factors necessitate gender perception of family inheritance and ownership of property in Igbo Land, and these include: cultural and traditional beliefs; greed; fear of reproach and mockery by kinsmen; and ignorance and lack of enlightenment.

Conclusion/Recommendations

From the data gotten in the course of this study, it can be concluded that the plight of women in Igbo land is pitiful. Society and the world has evolved, and certain practice have to be eradicated in order to ensure massive and even human and societal development. Consequently, effective legal frameworks have to be in place in order to protect the rights of women to inherit and own properties without fear of reproach. Also, education, sensitization and awareness-raising campaigns that challenge cultural beliefs and social norms that perpetuate gender inequality have to be initiated. These strategies could help to promote gender equity and address gender inequality in inheritance and property ownership in Igbo land.

To move beyond acknowledgment and into actionable change, the following targeted recommendations are proposed:

1. **Legal Empowerment and Advocacy:** There is an urgent need to translate national laws like the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act into local language and context. Legal aid clinics should be established in communities like Umuguma and Irete to educate women on their rights and provide pro-bono services to challenge discriminatory practices in court, setting new precedents.

2. Strategic Engagement with Traditional Institutions: Rather than dismissing traditional rulers, development agencies must engage them directly. Programs should be designed to include traditional leaders (Ezes) and council of elders in dialogues, showcasing how equitable inheritance can lead to stronger, more economically resilient families and communities, thus preserving the true spirit of Igbo progress rather than eroding it.
3. Economic Intervention Programs: Recommend the creation of targeted micro-finance and land acquisition loans specifically for women's cooperatives. When women have the economic means to purchase land themselves, as noted in the findings, it challenges the very foundation of the discriminatory system, moving the question from "Should she inherit?" to "Can she be stopped from owning what she has bought?"
4. Integration into Educational Curricula: Advocate for the integration of modules on gender equality, legal rights, and critical thinking about cultural practices into the curriculum of secondary schools and tertiary institutions in Igboland. This long-term strategy aims to enlighten the next generation of leaders, breaking the cycle of ignorance and ingrained tradition identified by interviewees like N3.

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