

## ROLE REDEFINITION IN FLORA NWAPA'S *EFURU* AND NEED FOR DYNAMIC GENDER BALANCE IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

By

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### Abstract

This paper is the second in a series written by the researchers in honour of Flora Nwapa. Here, the researchers' interest is on *Efuru*, Nwapa's debut novel, published in 1966, fifty-four years ago. Apart from correcting the distorted image usually painted of the African woman as weak, thoughtless and totally dependent on the man, *Efuru* also raises the issue of changing gender roles, an issue that is quite topical even in contemporary times. The present paper here explores the latter concern. Specifically, the paper seeks to assess the roles played by the male characters, compared to the female characters, in the novel, *Efuru*. The major objective is to draw attention to the weaker roles men are beginning to play in their families and society, as reflected in the novel. Lastly, the paper advocates for a dynamic gender balance in modern society. Much as women cry out for empowerment, they do not seek for the 'disempowerment' of men, for the input of both men and women is required for a successful family and society. The discussion has relied mainly on the gender role theories.

**Keywords:** gender role, redefinition, Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, gender balance, modern society

### 1. Introduction

*Efuru*, published in 1966 by Flora Nwapa, is widely acknowledged as the first novel that is written by a Nigerian woman and published by an African woman in the English language. In this regard, Nwapa is described as "Nigeria's first woman novelist and the first African woman writer to publish a novel in English"

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(Thompson, 2001). On first contact, *Efuru* is seen as interrogating patriarchy and its attendant underrepresentation and misrepresentation of the African woman in African literature. In this light, the present writer has, in another paper, analyzed the female characters in *Efuru* to reveal that the African woman has capacities and can indeed make significant contributions to the sustainable development of her family and community. On further examination, *Efuru* also seems to shed light on the issue of changing roles of men and women in our society. In this respect, too, *Efuru*, once again, reengages the researcher, but, this time, the focus is on the male characters and their strange behaviours in the story. This situation, as found in the novel, can be related to present realities in our society. There is a growing tendency today for boys and men to hibernate from important family and social matters, even in those concerning their own personal welfare. This issue is of great concern to many positive-minded persons today. Sommers (2013), has described it as the “underachievement of boys”, particularly as it concerns the boys’ performance in schools, offering a number of suggestions on how schools can handle the issue. The point is: men and boys are the other half of humanity, co-achievers with women and girls for a better society. Their underachievement, in any form, therefore, portends a great problem to society.

It is evident today that the traditional roles played by men and women in society are changing. In this regard, Haines, Deaux, and Lofaro (2016) report that in the past 30 years, women’s participation in the workforce, in athletics, and in professional education has increased, while men’s activities have been more stable. Also, Blossfeld (1995) argues that women’s increasing economic activities has also boosted their engagement in higher education. Yet, as Blossfeld concedes, women have continued to bear a disproportionately large share of family responsibilities despite their growing involvement in paid work. Agreeing with these writers (particularly, Blossfeld), the present researcher observes that in many aspects the activities and participation of women seem to be on the increase, while those of men seem to be on the decrease in present society. In many families, for instance, men seem to contribute less to the upkeep and training of their children. This is contrary to what happened in the past when men usually played key roles in the wellbeing and development of their family. Yet, the truth remains that the man is the head of the family. He is the one who first approaches the woman and seeks her hand in marriage. Also, once a woman accepts to marry a man, the woman leaves her parental home and changes her own ancestral name to that of her husband; it is not usually vice versa. As husband and wife, the woman and the man together run the affairs of

their family; it has never been a one-sided business. This is the way it used to be. This is the way it should be. But how have these roles changed over time? Nwapa's *Efuru* seems to be mirroring a society with a new set of roles for the man and the woman.

Changes in the participation of men and women are also being witnessed in the education industry today. In Nigeria, for example, at the tertiary level of education, it is observed that a greater number of girls and women get admitted to the different programmes, when compared with the number of boys and men being admitted in the same programmes. This is true even for the prestigious professional departments such as medicine, accountancy or law. The only academic programmes where the males still excel are the engineering, mathematics and the military. This situation is in sharp contrast to what it used to be in earlier years. The implications of this are many: one is that women may soon take control of most of the jobs in the country. With that invariably comes their economic, financial and even political domination. Men, on the other hand, if things continue this way, may be left to languish behind. This is not good for society, as men and women each are meant to contribute positively and maximally to societal development. Some researchers are of the opinion that the shifting of gender roles in the past 30 years has been so huge and has happened so quickly that men and women are still trying to sort out what the new roles and rules mean to them (Gender 101, web). It is observed that although men are generally open to the successes enjoyed by the women they share their lives with, some still find it hard to celebrate a woman's success because they feel it diminishes their own. There are other complexes that feature when men view themselves as under-achievers, or when they actually can be described as under-achievers. This paper, therefore, becomes necessary, to highlight the changing gender roles, as portrayed in *Efuru*, and to use them as platform to advocate for dynamic gender balance for modern society. Some theoretical literature on gender role is examined below.

## **2. Gender Role Theories**

### **2.1 Gender Role**

Gender role refers to the behaviors, attitudes, and dispositions that are typically associated with either the male or female social role (Wood & Eagly, 2011, citing Money, Hampson, & Hampson). Gender roles basically mean the same as sex roles in many traditional societies. That means that it is difficult to detach gender roles from sex roles. It is important to distinguish between the terms 'gender' and 'sex' here. The two separate terms, 'sex' and 'gender', are used to

designate biologically determined differences between men and women. While sex refers to the core biological features bestowed by nature which characterize males or females, gender, on the other hand, although it originates in the same biological features, goes far beyond the physiological and biological specifics of the two sexes to specific society's particular perceptions of the physical differences and the assumed tastes, tendencies and capabilities of men and women (The Gender Perspective, web). Gender differences, therefore, unlike the immutable characteristics of sex, are universally conceded in historical and comparative social analyses to be variants that are transformed over time and from one culture to the next, as societies change and evolve (The Gender Perspective, web). This means that sex remains the same in all societies, while gender varies with culture.

Some theorists tend to believe that the roles played by men and women in society are socially constructed, and may not necessarily relate to the sex of the person; others maintain that roles are a factor of someone's sex, the physiological and biological make-up of the individual. The debate has been typical of the nature-nurture controversy. Simone de Beauvoir's feminist works and Michel Foucault's reflections on sexuality, among others, have helped to inspire the idea that gender was mainly socially constructed and unrelated to sex (New World Encyclopedia). For the extremists here, example, Robert Connell (1987), a person could be born with male genitals but still be of feminine gender (New World Encyclopedia). Most scientists, however, reject Connell's research, because, for them, gender roles are nature-given. Concrete evidence exists proving the effect of hormones on behavior. Again, nineteenth century anthropologists have given credence to the 'nature' position, using descriptions of the imagined life of Paleolithic hunter-gatherer societies for evolutionary explanations of gender differences. For example, the need to take care of offspring may have limited the females' freedom to hunt and assume positions of power (New World Encyclopedia). Again, in support of the hand of nature on gender roles, Baron-Cohen (2003) states that the female brain is predominantly hard-wired for empathy, while the male brain is predominantly hard-wired for understanding and building systems. Baron-Cohen, citing the case of David Reimer to whom John Money unsuccessfully reassigned female gender, argues that raising a child in a cross-sex role does not cause the child to necessarily adapt to that role.

Notwithstanding this debate, there is no denying that both nature and nurture play complimentary roles in the enforcement of gender roles in society. Men and women, by nature, are built for certain jobs. For example, men,

generally, are bigger and stronger than women, physically, and so can easily engage in activities that require physical strength, more than women. Women, on their own side, are biologically fashioned to conceive, give birth to and suckle a child; hence they naturally can provide more direct care and spend more time with children. On the other hand, nurture, in the form of socializing agents, such as parents, teachers, schools, peers, movies, television, music, religion, and literature helps in teaching and reinforcing those roles for which nature has prepared one. Regarding the role of parents, particularly, in the enforcement of social roles in their young offspring, Harcourt observes that:

Traditionally, fathers teach boys how to fix and build things; mothers teach girls how to cook, sew, and keep house. Children then receive parental approval when they conform to gender expectations and adopt culturally accepted and conventional roles. All of this is reinforced by additional socializing agents, such as the media. In other words, learning gender roles always occurs within a social context, the values of the parents and society being passed along to the children of successive generations. (Harcourt, Gender Roles, web)

It is worthy of note, however, that in the knowledge-based economy of modern societies, occupations requiring physical strength have largely given way to those requiring mental strength; hence men and women can equally participate and adapt in a variety of tasks. Therefore, socializing agencies, particularly parents and school authorities, need to pay attention to the mental, physical, and psychological development of both the boy-child and the girl-child, to increase their versatility and get them ready to respond positively in any matter of importance.

The foregoing has attempted to describe the theory of gender role so as to use it to explain the behaviour of men and women in society. The question now is: To what extent does the behavior of the male characters in the novel *Efuru* conform to the expected gender role standard? The next section would now examine the male characters in the novel, *Efuru*, to determine how they behave, in relationship with the female characters in the novel.

### **3. The Male Characters in *Efuru* and Role Redefinition**

Two major male characters, Adizua and Gilbert, have been chosen for analysis here.

#### **3.1 Adizua**

Adizua is *Efuru*'s first husband in the story, *Efuru*. He is described as a "nobody" by *Efuru*'s family (p. 9), an "imbecile" by fellow farmers (p. 11), and "poor" by

Efuru herself (p. 10). Adizua's family is largely unknown, and of low repute, unlike that of Efuru, widely known as a noble family. At the onset of Efuru's relationship with Adizua, her family is disappointed with her choice and feels that their daughter has brought shame to the nobility of their lineage: "Our enemies will glory in this" (p. 9), they lament. Though poverty (lack of finance or property) can be a problem, the worst kind of poverty is poverty of the mind. It is this poverty of the mind that Adizua later proves to have. Thus, even when Adizua, through the dynamism of his wife, can no longer be regarded as poor, in terms of wealth, he remains under the shackles of poverty, through his behaviour.

Adizua's major problems are laziness and irresponsibility. In the farm, Adizua is too weak to withstand the discomforts of farming, especially those arising from their mosquitoes-ridden farm settlements. He goes home, leaving the farm settlement, at the slightest excuse. He is the laughing stock of other farmers. Efuru is the brain behind their family business. Adizua is also not good at trading; so much so that when Efuru is constrained by her maternity confinement, after giving birth to their long-sought-for baby, her husband, at a stage, becomes impatient, wanting her to resume trading immediately:

'Efuru, I think it is time you should face your trade. Your baby is old enough to be left with a nurse. My mother will see that you get a good nurse. At this time, your baby can eat some mashed yam well prepared with palm oil. You have to think over this, my dear wife.' (p. 36)

Adizua's laziness and selfishness, to the point of meanness, are revealed here. First, he wants his wife to resume her trading as soon as possible, after having her baby. Again, he wants his mum to get a nurse for his baby. Also, the term, 'your baby', as used by Adizua, suggests lack of commitment and love, on his part, for their precious child; it is as if the child is his wife's only and not his. He does not in the whole discussion offer to take up any form of responsibility: either with taking care of their baby or with taking care of their family trade, the family's source of revenue. At the end, he also shifts to his wife the task of thinking over the issue: "You have to think over this, my dear wife".

The height of Adizua's irresponsibility is displayed when Adizua abandons his beautiful, hardworking, loyal and noble wife, Efuru, for a faithless woman who already has two children and has abandoned her own husband. The mother of Adizua's woman friend says this of her:

'... She is a bad daughter. She won't listen to me. She won't listen to anybody. I am fed up with her. She simply brought her daughter to me the morning she

was leaving for Ndoni, without making adequate provision for her. The child's body is full of yaws....' (p. 55).

Compare this description to the testimony people give about the behaviour of Efurū: '.... Everybody in our town my child, knows that you are a good woman and what is more they love and respect you....' (p. 58).

Nwapa also says this of Efurū: "She was a remarkable woman. It was not only that she came from a distinguished family. She was distinguished herself" (p. 7).

Hence, Adizua's unceremonious breaking off from the smooth relationship between him and his loving, respectable, industrious and peaceful Efurū and his preference for a free, dirty, and irresponsible woman is indicative of his lack of value and judgment, thoughtlessness, irresponsibility, and perhaps inferiority complex. The Igbo society of Adizua's time recognizes polygamy and, so, Adizua should have been responsible enough to take a second wife if he has so wished, and Efurū will have supported him, as she herself has attested.

The climax of Adizua's rascality and lack of feeling is seen at the death of Ogonim, his only child with Efurū. His complete absence and inability to communicate throughout the episode is unexplainable, indicative of a super inferiority complex turned into psychological derangement at his failures. Eventually, Ossai, Adizua's mother, reveals at the height of Efurū's suffering that Adizua's father behaved in the same way; he abandoned Ossai, young Adizua, and their family and disappeared completely many years ago. With the disappearance, of Adizua also, Adizua's mother's worst fears have been confirmed: "The son of a gorilla must dance like the father gorilla" (p. 51). It may have been more helpful to view Adizua's reckless behaviour as merely a case of family genetics. Ajanupu, the sister to Ossai, Efurū's mother-in-law, however, views this disloyalty as a characteristic of all men. In her opinion, 'Men are such queer people. They are so weak that when they are under the thumb of a woman, she does whatever she likes with them...' (p. 70).

Many months after the burial of Ogonim, with the attendant havoc and pain of this loss, multiplied by the public shame brought by the continual inexplicable absence of her husband, Efurū, encouraged by her mother-in-law and family, eventually, takes her exit from her husband's home to return to her own parental home, to continue her life. Adizua in this story has single-handedly brought woe to his people, his extended family, his wife and himself.

### **3.2 Gilbert**

Gilbert, also known as Eneberi, is another major male character in the novel, *Efurū*. He is the second man who married Efurū, after the failure of her first

marriage. The first year of Efurú's marriage to Gilbert is a happy one. Gilbert expresses his love and respect for her. Efurú, on her part, does her duties well: 'She did not only take good care of her husband, she was sweet to her mother-in-law' (p. 136). About Efurú and Gilbert, the narrator observes: "They were so much together that people admired them. They went to the stream together, there they swam together, they came back together, and they ate together." (p. 137). After about a year of their happy marriage, Efurú has not been able to conceive, and before long, Gilbert begins to keep late nights. After four years of marriage to Efurú, Gilbert, encouraged by Efurú, takes a second wife, Nkoyeni. But it is obvious that Gilbert has started having extra-marital relationships with other women. He gets stranded at Ndoni where he has gone for business, in a situation that is not very clear to Efurú and Nkoyeni, his new wife. Efurú is disappointed by Gilbert's inability to be open to her and his new wife. Efurú, for the second time in her life, suffers a big humiliation when her husband, Gilbert, disappears and does not show up, even at the death of her father, Nwashike Ogene. It was a painful reminder of what she went through at the death of her only child in her first marriage. Despite the great humiliation and suffering Gilbert has caused his wives and family by his unexplainable absence at his father-in-law's burial ceremony and birth of his new son by Nkoyeni, he feels no compulsion to make explanations and amends. Gilbert shows no remorse whatsoever over his shortcomings. It is later revealed through some indirect gossips that Gilbert was jailed for three months at Ndoni, unraveling his unexplainable absence. Again, Gilbert has had a child by an unknown woman at Ndoni. Without warning, from nowhere, he brings this child home to stay with his family. Despite these humiliations and disappointments, Efurú still forgives and accepts her husband as he is. She is even planning to get a third wife for Gilbert, to douse the tension between him and his other wife, her mate, the young Nkoyeni, when she suddenly becomes very ill. The stress of running their home which has become polygamous and complicated by her husband's affairs, all alone, without the desired help from her husband, is enough to knock Efurú down.

Gilbert's final tragedy is that he joins the *dibia*, who comes to diagnose Efurú's sickness, in judging Efurú as unfaithful. It is ironical that Gilbert has questioned Efurú's loyalty and faithfulness to him, without any deference to his own infidelities and infirmities. Taking Efurú's suffering no more, the indefatigable Ajanupu is the person who deals a physical blow using the kitchen pestle to Gilbert, for daring to question Efurú's faithfulness to him. Again, it is Ajanupu who has taken Efurú away to a far-away hospital for proper medical



attention and she has remained with Efurū until she completely recovers her health. Alas, Efurū again has to leave her husband, after all these complications, particularly the one following her ill-health. She is innocent in all this, and is vindicated by the goddess, Utuosu, to whom she has gone to swear, to prove her faithfulness to her husband. Gilbert himself remains in hospital because of the injury received from Ajanupu's pestle. Nwashike Ogene, Efurū's father, has earlier lamented that 'Men of these days are not as responsible as we were in our days. They want to marry wives but they don't sit down and count the cost.' (p. 135). The two major male characters in the novel are just the same way – rascally, selfish, irresponsible and unwilling to contribute to the progress of their families and society.

From the discussion above, in *Efurū*, the men have practically no key role to play in the affairs of their families and communities. They are depicted as weak, irrational, selfish and irresponsible. They have nothing but sorrow to offer to their families and communities. They contribute little to the upkeep of their families, live licentious lives and seem to glory in destabilizing the peace and harmony in their household. Even the very marriage of Adizua and Efurū, for example, is made possible by Efurū herself who paid for her own bride price. Gilbert, her second husband, is also confused, selfish and mean. As seen in the novel, the inaction of the men is also witnessed in many other social functions expected of them. For example, Adizua and Gilbert, respectively, cannot stand by their wife in her times of distress. These men, respectively, abandon their family responsibilities, leaving them squarely on the shoulders of their wife. None of the men is able to perform the duties of a husband, father, co-provider and head of his family. The major male characters in the novel, *Efurū*, are totally confused, lacking focus and character. In contrast, the women are the ones who sustain positive values and traditions in their families and society.

#### **4. Gender Roles and Present Realities**

*Efurū* was first published in 1966, fifty-four years ago, yet the issue of gender roles reversal, as treated in the novel, is still very significant in Nigeria and many parts of the world. The present reality is that as more and more women have access to education, paid work, including business, office and very high-profile government positions, more and more men, on the other hand, seem to shy away from these socio-economic opportunities. Yet women continue to carry most of the domestic responsibilities of their homes, even in situations where their husbands are in a better position to take care of some of these responsibilities. The point is that boys and men are also not always trained or

socialized to get involved in such domestic matters. With so much time to spare, as seen in the case of Adizua and Gilbert, men are bound to misbehave. On the other hand, most women today are overworked. For Pedrero (1996), for example, women in developing countries are estimated to do between two-thirds and three-quarters of the domestic work. The same document shows that women in Mexico spent an average of 56 hours per week on household tasks, while men spent seven hours. The result is that women in recent times are more prone to suffer stress and/or crash with a health condition, as we see in Efuru's case. Domestic work in itself is a very tedious unending job; women in the years gone by coped better because they did not worry with other jobs which drain them both mentally and physically. The case is different today.

When boys and men are socialized to do less for their families and societies, they form the culture of laziness and the implication is usually enormous. Women may soon discover, in reality, that they are the ones generally expected to seek the hands of their husbands in marriage, pay their own bride price or perhaps their husbands' groom price, and generally run the affairs of their family without much input from their husbands, as seen in the novel under study. The situation is such that even when the wife is ready to hide the underachievement of her husband, just to remain devoted and married to her husband, the man seems simply unappreciative of all this, and is rather ready to sacrifice the wife at the least opportunity. After all, there are many other women who are ready to jump in and take the position of his wife. This is seen in the way Gilbert quickly believes the wrong verdict of the native doctor on Efuru's ill-health and suffering. The negative behaviours and attitudes of the men in *Efuru* may have been caused by inferiority complex. Perhaps, the men discovering that they contribute little to the growth of their families and society have developed inferiority complex; hence exhibiting all sorts of abusive attitudes, which easily results in pain and loss of lives. Society invariably suffers when men neglect to play their own role or women theirs. The question then is: what can be done to correct the growing trend of lopsided gender roles, as witnessed in *Efuru*? For the present researcher the solution lies in a dynamic balancing of the gender roles.

##### **5. Dynamic Gender Balance as Solution to the Lopsided Changing Gender Roles**

Society is changing fast. Before now, having physical strength was a major requirement in the pursuit of socio-economic development. Now, knowledge has become the most valuable asset. In the knowledge-driven modernity of

today, men and women can now equally participate and adapt in a variety of tasks. A dynamic gender balance is therefore what is needed to streamline the lopsided gender roles, as portrayed in *Efuru* and currently being witnessed today in society.

Dynamic gender balance refers to equity between the man and the woman in resource access and allocation as well as opportunities for social and economic advancement (1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED)). Because of the basic link between gender equity and sustainable development, modern societies preach gender balance and equity. The concept of gender balance is closely related to mainstreaming. Gender mainstreaming has been described as a globally accepted strategy for promoting gender equality. It involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities – policy development, research, advocacy/ dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and project (UN Women).

Issues relating to gender balance have received priority attention from many government and development agencies for several years now. The objective is to promote gender equality in all spheres of life, including family and community life, and to encourage and enable men to take responsibility for their sexual and reproductive behaviour and their social and family roles” (International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, as cited in “The Gender Perspective”). The issue of gender roles and balance is important in present society, where the potentialities of both the men and the women are required in tackling complex global issues. In this regard, Tietcheu (2005) asserts:

We shall never overcome the challenges of our society today if we continue to view leadership as a single thing, if we do not address and approach it collectively, which means mobilizing all the living forces of the community. Applying that to the relationship of women and men will mean recognizing women and men both as leaders in their different capacities in society—building a social system where the leadership, including economic, political, religious and spiritual, is no longer the affair of men only. (123-124)

So far, the rights of women and girls have been the major focus of many government and non-government organizations working on gender. This is not surprising because of the many years of subjugation of women by agents of patriarchy in society. However, given our discussion so far, the issue of non-performance of men as found in the family and other areas of society should

also be a major concern of gender studies. With girls' enrollments increasing faster than those of boys at all levels of education, and boys dropping out of school at higher rates than girls, though girls continue to face discrimination in access to primary education in some countries and regions (UNESCO, 2012), stakeholders should be worried. As UNESCO observes, women now generally outperform men in education, though they still face significant shortfalls and discrimination in the labour market and often find themselves in jobs where their skills are not well used. When men abandon their roles as husband, father, co-provider and head of the family in society, women are overburdened and everybody invariably suffers.

## 6. Conclusion

Role, as used in this paper, refers to gender roles, the roles assigned to men and women by virtue of their sex, nature, and training in society. There are certain roles that only a man or a woman can perform in society, irrespective of their conditioning. A simple example is that a father is always a man, while a mother is no other than a woman. Traditionally, in any civilized society, the husband is the head of the family, unless he is absent or dead. Being the head of the family implies that the man is the father, protector, co-provider and leader of the household. A woman, on the other hand, is mother, care-giver, co-provider, and equal to her husband in esteem and influence. It is understandable that Nwapa in *Efuru* has portrayed the influential roles played by women in not only her marital home, but in her community in general. Nwapa being notably the first African woman that published a novel written in the English language was bent on correcting the distorted image usually painted of the African woman as inconsequential. It is troubling, however, that Nwapa, in the bid to correct this misrepresentation of the African woman, has, in *Efuru*, unfortunately, painted another unwholesome picture of the African man as lazy, irresponsible and incapable of any rational thought. This negative portrayal can well become a troublesome stereotype against men.

As unfortunate as this portrayal is, our society today seems to be drifting towards this reality, where the men take the weaker roles, and the women the stronger roles, particularly in the family. Nwapa seems to have clearly perceived the changing gender roles even in her own days, fifty three years and more ago. Men, as depicted in the novel, are abandoning their traditional roles as family head, father, protector and co-provider with the wife. The women, thus, are forced to take up more responsibilities: those traditionally reserved for women as well as those traditionally reserved for the men. As stated by "The World

Women 1995", women must reconcile the twin roles of 'home maker' and 'money-maker", as well as coping with sexist prejudices. Even in schools, there is a general observation of increasing male under-achievement. A huge task therefore faces all stakeholders involved in training children, boys and girls, in our society. They include parents, schools, writers, musicians, media practitioners, the Church and society as a whole. There should be a conscious effort to find out "if the social structure we have built gives possibilities for women as well as men to enjoy and live to their potential, to express the best of themselves with regard to the talents each one has" (Tietcheu, 2005, p. 116). No child, male or female, should be allowed or trained to limit their natural potentialities, their abilities to contribute their quota to their families and larger communities; rather each should be encouraged to bring out their best. This paper advocates for a dynamic gender balance as a way of correcting lopsided gender roles gaining ground in society today.

#### **7. Recommendations**

1. Men/ boys and women/ girls should be proud to carry out social roles which nature has fashioned for them.
2. Parents, particularly, must begin early to engage their boy-children with active roles in the family. Domestic work should not be left for girls alone.
3. School authorities must find ways of making the school conducive to both the males and females. For example, recreational activities should be emphasized to rekindle the interest of the boys in academics.
4. Men/ boys and women/ girls should see themselves as partners in progress and therefore should learn to work together, at home, in schools, and society, without any complexes.
5. To enhance the capacities, self-confidence, self-worth, self-reliance and self-esteem of men and women, there should be extensive and intensive public enlightenment campaigns on the advantages of dynamic gender balance and roles in the families and society.
6. Parents, teachers, schools, and curriculum designers should be mindful of recommending instructions, training, exercises, games, texts/ books, or media which may, inadvertently, inhibit or limit the capacities of either the boys or the girls under their care.
7. The role of literature and other media in fostering more positive gender roles for boys/men and girls/women should be explored. Reading culture should be encouraged.

8. In view of No. 7 above, writers of literature, musicians, film producers and other creative artists should strive to eschew negative gender stereotypes for both the male and the females from their works, to help foster dynamic gender roles in society.

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