

UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

FACULTY OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND LITERARY STUDIES

TOPIC:

DISCUSS GENDER AND SEXUALITY USING ANY TWO MODERN  
COMEDY PLAYS

AN ASSIGNMENT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFIMENT OF THE COURSE

ELS 240 (MODERN COMEDY)

BY

IZIOGO IRUKA NWEBONYI

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LECTURER: MR ONYEKA ODOH

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Gender and sexuality are two different terms that are sometimes used interchangeably, although, they do have meaning that are not similar. Sexuality refers to the biological trait of every human being. A person's sex is determined when this trait is examined. It can never be changed unless by surgical procedure. Gender on the other hand is how we perceive ourselves based on our life experiences and the roles we play in our communities and society. Therefore, biology is the basis for social and cultural influences that impact gender roles and identity.

The wives' revolt by J.P. Clerk portrays an African society where roles stratification is only well perceived. On the masculine character, Okoro, one of the chiefs of the community exerts control and superiority by organizing and making decisions affecting the entire community to the exclusion of female gender. The assembly of the chiefs, kinsmen and elders where the community land is sold and the public fund embezzled is done by the men. This control that men exert over women characterizes them (women) as the weaker sex since they have no say.

These controls exist both in their individual families and outside homes. Though some men as the head of the family do not care in the provision of the family needs but the women have no choice than to endure and put food on the children's table hence as wives and subordinates to men. Because females are looked down upon, the men engages in goat hunting and killing which eventually results to the wives revolt. Okoro who assumes that women are valueless in the community refuses to accept his action as a fault but thinks he can take all responsibilities of the family as well as performing the house chores. This play places men as the human gender for whom the society belongs; who is accepted is welcomed, who is rejected has no objection. But in all, everything remains under their control and decision.

From the play, the world of female gender is the one of submission to men and subjection to limited and meaner jobs or works. wives' revolt is the product of women's reaction to men's influence over them. In the play, Idama, okoro's wife and other women figures get a series of negative influence from both their husband and the entire society's political system of men. She takes care of the children by cooking their foods and giving them good maintenance. Okoro never borders to contribute positively or support the wife's welfare.

Since the women have no say, they rather remain silent and continue to their fate. The women who are deeply overshadowed by men report the grievances to the assembly of men who make and execute social decisions but to no avail. As a result, they revolt against such domination by leaving the society to another. Eventually, the women return to their homes still under the control of men. but there is greater understanding and reconciliation among the two gender. As it is, there is unequal and balanced society where male gender cannot do without female gender and as well female cannot exist without male.

The concept of gender and sexuality is also seen in Jero's play by Wole Soyinka. The setting of the play portrays the dominance of prophetic ministries where men like bro Jeroboam, Ananias, Shedrach, Caleb, Mathew and others exert the power of prophesizing. The society is heralded by men's dominance of several superior posts in the government and religious sector. Bro Jeroboam who is a famous prophet of the beach through his intelligence controls chume's wife indirectly to remain in her calm state by telling chume not to beat his wife.

The above assertion suggests that the influence and control of men over women is even extended to brutality. The men make decisions on behalf of the women which the female gender is expected to accept without objection. Being eager to control his wife, chume asks bro

Jeroboam to allow him to beat his wife, Amope. The assumption of beating one's wife is actually to submit to their husband's decisions and order.

On the part of female and feminine gender from the play, Amope is portrayed a feminine gender whose status is not measurable to that of men. She engages in meaner jobs like petty trading of provision sales which actually keeps in providing food for the family. Even sister Rebecca is subjected to the service of bro Jero's ministry, a status suitable for women gender. Other works which women are subjected to includes: stock-fish selling, child breeding and many others. Amope receives severe beating from her husband, chume, a conditional measure that men uses to obtain obedience from their subordinate wives.

In the two plays discussed on gender and sexuality above, there is a gap between the two gender/sex in the case of social hierarchy, decision making, dominance and leadership roles.