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Female-dominated informal labour sector and family (in) stability: The interface between reproduction and production

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Abstract

The achievement gender equality and the empowerment of all women (SDG-5) could be slow considering the African traditional cultural expectation of women on exclusive home management, and reproduction, in the face of chagrin economic drive for family income augmentation. The study examined the nexus between women's role in managing the family, their traditional role of reproduction and expected procreative activities. The research adopted a qualitative research approach with in-depth interviews to obtain data from women entrepreneurs in the informal labour sector in a purposively selected local Adire textile industry in Abeokuta, Nigeria. A snowballing approach was adopted in the selection of the 9 participants that voluntarily agree to

participate in the interview. Data were analysed through content analysis and thematic analysis. Findings revealed that the involvement of women in the Adire textile have no negative effects on their families, rather, it has enhanced stability. Respondents have been able to supplement finances at home, the practices that are so much cherished by their husbands. Since the textile is a local though popular small industry, and the trade knowledge has been oral 'parents-to-children knowledge transference', government could intervene for a formal restructuring. Also, policy that could encourage mutual husband-and-wife participation in home chores and other family responsibilities rather than traditional exclusive delegation to women. This could prevent avoidable negative health consequences for women.

Keywords:

[Adire economic empowerment family in \(stability\) gender informal labour sector Nigeria women](#)

1. Introduction

Contemporary studies in demography, economics, and gender analysis have for sometimes acknowledged that gender roles and modifications or alterations in family patterns are intertwined. There are various strands of discourse on gender roles and family stability; however, the prevalent argument is that the traditional female caregiver and male breadwinner societies, that is, gender-role specialization, intensifies couples' reciprocal reliance on each other and thereby upholds family stability (Vidal & Lersch, [2019](#)). In past, it was perceived and argued that women's economic dependence on their spouses was imperative for family stability as it enforces their acceptance of their husband's control. Furthermore, male roles were meant to curb women's extremes and entrench their household decision-making power. In line with this thought, the study by Schuler et al. ([2018](#)) posits that women's economic empowerment reduced their dependence on men and has become a threat to family stability and thus could engender divorce risks. Similarly, family instability is documented as a predictors for increasing proportions of dual-earner couples, where both women and men are engaged in labour market work (Duvander, Johansson & SSI Inspectorate, 2020). Oláh et al. ([2014](#)) avow that in modern times, ideational changes such as the need for self-actualization, the spread and rise individualism and the aspiration for paid work are the foundational component of family formation, influencing their fragility. A broad body of research including those by Upadhyay and Karasek ([2012](#)) demonstrates that women's empowerment is related to reproductive outcomes, such as contraceptive use, low fertility and increasing birth intervals and general family stability (Amoo, [2020](#)). Thus, the involvement of couples in market production affects the quality of family life (Storenga et al., [2013](#)). On the other hand, another strand of argument explains that the full participation and partnership of both women and men are required for reproductive and productive life including sharing financial responsibilities in the household for family stability (Khanom, [2013](#)).