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**Intragender Relationship of the Traditional Ilorin
Women in Domestic Front: Lessons for Modern
Muslim Women**

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Abstract

The traditional Ilorin society was renowned for peaceful coexistence among its people and decorum in the family domain. Families made Islamic principles their watchwords and the genders collaborated to ensure that marital obligations were efficiently performed. This paper focuses on the pattern of family management displayed by traditional Ilorin women to facilitate peaceful cohabitation and efficient performance, as wives and mothers. The study is historical and ethnographic, dwelling on the system's pattern of orientation and integration of new wives, division of domestic chores, collaborative nurturing of children, fraternity system and disciplinary measures. The major instruments for data collection are interview, observation, documented studies and Islamic texts. The study revealed religious faithfulness as their inspiration and Islamic ethics of gentility, mutual support, collaboration among women cohered to channel the family course. These were borne out of sincere love and unity which translated into peace and harmony in the home and the society. The paper

submits that if modern women can embrace this Islamic interactive etiquette and hold the marital duties in high esteem, as done by the traditional Ilorin women, there will be family cohesion, meaningful progress in the society.

Keywords

Traditional Women, Home Management, Fraternity, Islamic Ethics, Ilorin.

Introduction

Islamic scholarship among the traditional Ilorin dated back to 1830 when the town became an Emirate under the Sokoto Caliphate.¹ This was brought about by an itinerant Islamic scholar, Shaykh Salih Ibn Ahmad Junta (popularly called Alimi), and his *Jamā'a* along with other Muslim settlers he met on his arrival in 1816.² Shaykh Alimi's vast knowledge of Islamic sciences and his missionary ingenuity drew more scholars of Islam and other people from different heterogeneous backgrounds to the town, either to teach, learn, seek spiritual assistance or guidance. Within a very short time, the Muslim (*jamā'a*) became populous, with Islam becoming the only unifying factor which facilitated socialization and integration among the people. Accordingly, Islamic principles submerged the diverse ethno-cultural practices of the heterogeneous groups. Since then, Islamic law governed every aspect of the Ilorin emirate life.³

The traditional Ilorin society was acclaimed to be pure and simple with no accessories.⁴ The people, regardless of their gender, were enthusiastic to live in accordance with the principles of Islam. Virtues like piety, simplicity, kindness, love, co-operation, patience, endurance, devotion and commitment, among others, permeated the communal life. These dispositions created healthy social interactions and orderliness in the home and the larger society. Each gender worked separately to complement one another in making a whole. The male gender (grandfather, father, uncle, son,

¹ S. J. Hogben, *An Introduction to the History of Islamic States of Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Oxford University Press, 1967), 154-155.

² L. A. K. Jimoh, *Ilorin: The Journey So Far* (Ilorin: Atoto Press, 1994), 50-52.

³ L. A. K. Jimoh, 9.

⁴ L. A. K. Jimoh, 9; T. O. Gbadamosi, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba 1841-1908* (London: Longman, 1978), 10. The interviewees equally confirmed this religious disposition.

and grandson) usually worked jointly for the maintenance of the family. They engaged in occupations such as, farming, hunting, blacksmithing, weaving of cloth, Arabic and Islamic scholarship.⁵ In line with the Islamic marital law, which obligated the husband to maintain his family,⁶ this maintenance duty was discharged by the eldest male member in the family who controlled the joint family enterprise.⁷ As the family head, he also provided guidance and mentorship with the support of other elderly people in the family. On the other hand, the family female members consisting of grandmothers, mothers, wives, daughters and other female relations jointly oversaw the home front, in adherence to Islamic duties of wifeness and motherhood.⁸ Though, some of them engaged in occupations like dyeing, pottery, petty trading among others,⁹ these did not in any way hinder their domestic duties.

According to Hermon- Hodge,¹⁰ marriage was usually a family affair in its preparation, execution, and sustenance. Most times, marriage partners were within the extended family or friends, purposely to solidify kinship or friendship as the case might be. Hence, each of the in-laws committed much to sustain the union.¹¹ Though, husband and wife interaction was minimal, it was very cordial and peaceful. The husband wielded so much power on his wife and she dared not contest anything, in a bid to comply with the Islamic rulings on total submissiveness to the husband. Hence, a wife always accorded her husband high honour and in all circumstances, even at the expense of her own comfort. Polygyny was the norm in family formation, while people lived in the extended family compound of several husbands and wives of multiple generations (parents, grandparents and great

⁵ H. B. Hermon-Hodgem, *-Gazetteer of Ilorin Province* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1921), 232.

⁶ A. Al-Jaziriy, *Kitābul-Fiqh 'alā Madhāhibil Arba'ah Vol.4* (Dārul Irshād Liltibā'ah wan-Nashr), 148, 223-224, 489-503.

⁷ The information was given by Justice Salihu Olohuntoyin Muhammed (Retired Grand Kadi, Kwara State Shariah Court of Appeal, Ilorin); Yinusa Abdulkareem (Magaji, Ile Mejidadi, Okeagbede, Ilorin); Abdullahi Babatunde (Retired administrator, Adabata, Ilorin), and Abubakar Ishola (Businessman, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin), interview by author December 06, 2019, among others.

⁸ M. A. Al-Hashimi, *The Ideal Muslimah: The True Islamic Personality of the Muslim Woman as defined in the Qur'an and Sunnah*, trans. Nasiruddin Al-Khattab (Saudi Arabia: International Islamic Publishing House, 1998), 215-230.

⁹ Hermon-Hodge, *Gazetteer of Ilorin Province*, 276-278, 280-282.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, 279-280.

¹¹ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin), Salamatu Amosa (Aged woman, Oke-kere, Ilorin); Fatmoh Abdullahi (Aged woman, Isale Maliki, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, June 10, 2019.

grandparents). Women were housed at the rear of the house while the male folk occupied the front for protection.

The pattern of family management displayed by women in this period was fascinating. There was a perfect hierarchy which facilitated women's interaction and coordination of the family. The wives in the family were headed by the most senior wife (*Iyalé Agba*) who wielded so much power as to control and scold erring or stubborn wives, along with the other senior wives in the extended family compound. In this system, there was adequate respect for seniority and consideration for the junior ones, these enhanced confidence and followership. Their supportive system of felicitating together and sharing burdens on the one hand and their collaborative nurturing of children on the other hand created, in no small measure, family oneness and orderliness. It is this ingenuity of the traditional Ilorin women that this paper hopes to explore for modern women to emulate for peace of the homes and cohesion in the extended family. The paper dwells on the pattern of orientation and integration of a new wife, division of domestic chores, collaborative nurturing of children, supportive system, and disciplinary measures. Lessons drawn from this traditional system are set as model to ameliorate the challenges faced by modern women at home. The study is historical and ethnographic with interview and observation as the major instruments used to source for data. 50 aged respondents consisting of 40 women and 10 men, were interviewed together with 50 middle-age and young women and men among the indigenes. Due to space constraint, few people are referenced to represent the interviewees, who were selected from different quarters of the town.

Orientation and Integration of a New Wife

In the traditional Ilorin tradition, after the marriage ceremony, the new bride would be taken to her husband's family, and she would be handed over to the *Magaji* (head of the family). The *Magaji* would in turn hand her over to the most senior wife (*Iyalé*). Other wives of family would welcome her with songs, prayers, and felicitations. The senior (*Iyalé*) would hand her over to her immediate co-wife (if her husband had another wife) or a designate wife (*Iyalé iyawo*) in the family for hosting (*Gbigba iyawo*).¹² For two weeks, the (*Iyalé*) would give the new bride some

¹² The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin); Ummulkhair Atanda (Aged

of her wears to dress with, attending to her needs such as feeding, bathing, *etc.* as well as keeping her company. Thereafter, the new bride and her host *Iyalé* would together engage in communal service of sweeping the family compound and fetching water for all the wives in the compound. This service ushered her into the family. A critical look at this aspect of the orientation of the new wife shows that the said communal service was tedious and laborious for the new bride.

As part of the orientation and integration of the new bride, some of the senior (*Iyalé*) would preside over a meeting among the wives in the compound, where the new bride would be guided and instructed on names to call her seniors and the children in the compound, e.g., *Iyami* (My Mother) or *Iyami Kaa* (My Mother in the interior), *Iyami Elepo* (My Mother that sells palm oil) as the case may be, for elderly wives. She was equally not expected to call all the children by name, even if the child is few months old when she joined the family. So, nicknames like, (*Ibadiaran*) 'One with buttocks suit for velvet clothing', (*Opelenge*) 'The Slim Lady', (*Ayiluko*) Fat Lady, (*Iyako*) 'My Mother-in-law', *etc.* are the female children, and (*Omokewu*) Qur'an Student, (*Okomi*) My Husband, (*Ajiwokewu*) One who wakes up to recites the Qur'an, (*Alfa*) The Cleric, (*Babaokomi*). My Father-in-Law, are used for the male children.¹³ However, she was either addressed as (*Iyawo*) wife or by her real name. She is expected to honour and serve every member of the family including the extended ones. Even, when the female children got married, she was still expected to serve them, particularly during ceremonies.¹⁴ Interestingly, her humility and diligence attracted respect and honour from all and sundry. Both the old and the young would surround her with love and care.

Division of Domestic Chores

The domestic activities were evenly shared among every family female member. In this respect, the women partake in domestic chores as stakeholders in the overall well-being of the family. In the

woman, Gaa Saka, Ilorin); Abebi Amosa (Aged woman, Kuntu, Ilorin); Ummulkhair Abdullahi (Aged woman, Isale Maliki, Ilorin) interview by author, February 10, 2020.

¹³ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin).

¹⁴ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin); Joko Obalowu (Aged woman, Karuma, Ilorin); Habiba Kadiri (Aged woman, Adifa, Ilorin); Fatimoh Amuda (Aged woman, Oja-Gboro, Ilorin); *etc.* interview by author, June 16, 2019.

cooking for instance, most families shared the task in the following: the youngest wife or wives fetched firewood and set fire for cooking. They were equally responsible for the grinding of pepper, grains, or cassava/yam flour (*elubo*) as the case might be. The next senior wives were saddled with the preparation of dishes such as yam flour meal (*amala*), maize flour meal (*tuwo*), pounded yam (*iyam*), etc. Due to the intricacies of this chores, some wives were saddled with the direct preparation, while others monitored the processes to ensure best output. The most senior wife sorted out vegetables like (*eku, efo*, etc.), cooked them along with stew and dishes them out. The distribution of chores was not only intended for grooming of the junior wives, but to ensure that the food was properly prepared, more importantly in a bid to please their husband. Based on the respect commanded by the most senior wife (through her fairness) she was in charge of the distribution of food, meat or fish that without any objection from other wives.

In honour of the husbands as the heads, their shares were usually the first to be dished and the youngest served them. The children were then called upon to pick theirs. The co-wives ate together in the same plate, but the most senior wife (*Iyalé*) set the pace, while others followed. At times, the senior wife shared the meat/fish or edible animal skin or hide (*panmo*) (if available) or picked her own and others followed suit according to seniority. The female children ate together as the male also did. The used plates were washed by the youngest wives along with the elderly female children as a way of grooming them as well.¹⁵ In other instances, as the younger wives were busy with house chores, the seniors looked after their toddlers as a duty. Other domestic chores of cleaning the compounds and washing of the dresses were also done by the younger wives and the girls.

Collaborative Nurturing of Children

As expounded in both the Qur'an and the Hadith that the woman has the primary obligation of conceiving, nurturing and serving as model for the younger ones;¹⁶ the activities of women of this period captured these duties efficiently. As was their tradition, they collaborated in ensuring that both the baby and mother received

¹⁵ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin)

¹⁶ Hinna Mirza Upal, "A Celebration of Mothering in the Qur'an," *Journal of the Association for Research on Mothering*, vol. 7, no. 1, 87-96.

care. The experienced women offered useful hints and herbs to overcome pregnancy inconveniences. Upon delivery, these women would also bath the new mother and her baby in a special way to quicken her recovery and for the baby to have a healthy growth.¹⁷ Her (*Iyalé*) or designate senior would be sleeping with her in order to give needful attention to the baby and guide the mother on the childcare procedures. This she would do for a week, while the mother eventually continued with the baby care.

Thereafter, senior women monitored the child healthy development. They ensured that the child was well breastfed with words of encouragement to the mother. Every male child was breastfed for four years and the female three years. More time was allotted for the male child to make him intuitively kind when he came of age. Little time was given the female child who was generally considered to be naturally merciful. In addition, the child would be associated with a stepmother who will be responsible for him or her, and not the direct mother. This system made every woman a stakeholder in children nurturing and they did it volitionally such that hardly would a child grow up to identify his/her biological mother.¹⁸

Character building, as ordained in Islam,¹⁹ was top-most in the mind of every Ilorin adult, regardless of gender in the traditional period. The whole society conscientiously partook in ensuring that young children were well groomed to develop balanced personality and act wisely and judiciously anytime, everywhere and with anybody. The elderly women had the obligation of inculcating the culture of civility and respect in all and sundry. This, they did with passion by dedicating their time to provide counselling as they mentored their wards. More attention was given to female children as a way of equipping them for future engagements. More so, a daughter was seen as an ambassador of her family, hence, her behaviour was considered to be a reflection of her family's. Her blameworthy traits were constantly condemned, while the praiseworthy ones were extolled. She was

¹⁷ A. I. Jawondo, "Traditional Education in Ilorin Emirate," in *Ilorin Centre of Learning*, ed. S. A. Jimoh (Ilorin: JIMSON Publishers, N.D.), 22.

¹⁸ Halimat Yusuf (Retired administrator and former commissioner, Kwara State, Ile Magaji, Oke Suna, Ilorin); Ayinke Saka (former commissioner, Kwara State, Okeagbede, Ilorin), etc. interview by author, June 12, 2019

¹⁹ Aisha Utz, *Psychology from the Islamic Perspective* (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 2011), 99-114.

mentored on that which would make her a good wife and a caring mother, including peaceful coexistence in the society.²⁰

Inculcation of Islamic education was handled with all seriousness by traditional Ilorin women. They complemented the efforts of their male folk by encouraging or reporting erring children for discipline. Their religious adherence made the children to naturally embrace the Islamic way as a norm. They taught the fear of God and the need to always act righteous in all circumstances and.²¹

Fraternity System

The fraternity system practiced by the traditional Ilorin women incorporates friendship and mutual support to each other. This was evident in their manner of welcoming a new wife into the family (*Iyawo gbigba*). Subsequently, the senior wives willingly guided the junior wives on the basic ethics of family socialization. Similar gesture was also extended to a new wife when she gave birth and her gentle integration into motherhood. For days after birth, for instance, the new mother enjoyed communal assistance in her cooking, fetching of water, washing and other house-keeping activities. The sharing of domestic chores among all categories of women in the family and collaborative nurturing of children were a demonstration of sisterhood. They exhorted one another on religious adherence and discouraged what was evil as commanded in Qur'an 3:110, "Ye are the best of peoples, evolved for mankind, enjoining what is right, forbidding what is wrong, and believing in Allah..." Also, they acted in accordance with Qur'an 4:34 and the following Prophetic submissions,

When God's Messenger was asked which woman was best. He replied, "The one who pleases (her husband) when he looks at her, obeys him when he gives a command, and does not go against his wishes regarding her person or property by doing anything of which he disapproves."²²

²⁰ Sherifat Hussain-Abubakar, "Ilorin Women and Family Life in Retrospect: Implications for the Modern Women," in *Ilorin Emirate in Periscope (A Compendium of Articles)* vol. 1. ed. Abdulaheem H.I. et al. (Ilorin: Ilorin Descendant Progressive Union, 2015), 52-54.

²¹ Sherifat Hussain-Abubakar, "Ilorin Women and Family Life..."

²² Mishkat al-Masabih 3272, SUNNAH.COM, accessed, June 22, 2022, <https://sunnah.com/mishkat:3272>.

When a woman observes the five times daily prayers (Ṣalawāt), fasts during Ramaḍān, preserves her chastity and obeys her husband, she may enter by any of the gates of paradise she wishes.²³

Traditional Ilorin women exhibited submissiveness and faithfulness as expected of every Muslim wife to her husband. They even attributed these as determinant factors for Allah's blessing on the children. They constantly admonished one another on the need to overlook the inadequacies of their husbands. In the case of dispute with husband, other women, particularly the senior ones, would persuade the aggrieved wife to exercise patience and endure for peace to reign and for her children to be upright.²⁴ They used the following aphorism to underpin this positive behaviour, 'a wife who endures her husband would have blessed children' ("*Obirin toba gba ifa fun oko re ni omọ re ma ni alubarika*"). In the extreme cases of marital discord, the mother-in-law intervened and called her son to order or reported him to the *Magaji* for rebuke. In another instance, the senior women would intercede by pleading with the husband to exhibit positive change, even when they knew he was at fault.²⁵

The traditional Ilorin women were noted for their high level of sharing-spirit among themselves. They rallied round each other during ceremonies by active participation and exchange of gifts to ameliorate financial burden.²⁶ At the challenging times, they were readily available to commiserate. They kept each other company with positive expressions, prayers, cash, provisions, etc. to alleviate the grief. A problem of one of them was considered problem of all; they were always on their toes to find solution to it. Sometimes, if a fellow woman detected a problem threatening her colleague, she would not only call attention to it, but join hands in finding solution to it and the victim would accept the gesture with utmost gratitude. This friendly habit changed negative tendencies such as,

²³ Mishkat al-Masabih 3254, SUNNAH.COM, accessed, June 22, 2022, <https://sunnah.com/mishkat:3254>.

²⁴ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin); Joko Obalowu (Aged woman, Karuma, Ilorin); Habiba Kadiri (Aged woman, Adifa, Ilorin); Fatimoh Amuda (Aged woman, Oja-Gboro, Ilorin), etc., interview by author, June 16, 2019.

²⁵ The information was given by Saratu Muse (Aged woman, Alanamu, Ilorin); Habeeba Ayinke Jimoh (Female Islamic Scholar, Omada, Ilorin); Joko Obalowu (Aged woman, Karuma, Ilorin); Habiba Kadiri (Aged woman, Adifa, Ilorin) ...

²⁶ The information was unanimously given by the interviewees.

envy, gossiping, and rivalry. This culminated into exhibition of sincere love, concerns, and unity in the home and the larger society.

Disciplinary Measures

During this period, disputes were settled by womenfolk among themselves without recourse to the male members of the family. The respect for seniority and the sincerity of the senior wives accounted for peaceful settlement. The (*Iyalé*) would preside over the arbitration panel while other senior wives in the family compound were in attendance. The erring or stubborn wife would be reprimanded based on the gravity of the offence. The uncouth woman-, would learn her lesson in a very hard way, particularly when withdrawal of assistance or her isolation were employed as punishment. The instant effect of these steps helped to nip stubbornness in the bud. Also, no matter the intensity of the disagreement between co-wives, it was forbidden for them to engage in physical combat. When it happened, the erring co-wives would be punished publicly. The punishment was usually so humiliating that, it served as deterrent to stubborn women. Example of this was bathing with ashes (*eru kunkun*) for the culprits. Both women would be bathed with wet ashes. They would be made to pound (*yangi*) pieces of rock or water inside mortal (*odo*). As both pounded together, they spat on each other continuously without allowing them to clean the saliva. People would watch them and sing reprimanding songs like: ‘jealous wives fought and fell into the well, shame on them (“*ojowu ja, oko kanga, alaode*”).²⁷ This type of disciplinary measure is not only demeaning to womanhood, but also anti-Islam, no matter its good intent. According to Shobalaje and Rukayatu, this punishment is seldomly used and meant to scare co-wives from unhealthy rivalry and violence which destroy family harmony.²⁸ The public disgrace and

Generally, children in the family regardless of their mothers enjoyed a good relationship. They were socialized to respect themselves; the junior ones addressed their senior ones with respect, while the latter were gentle on their junior ones. Disagreements between the junior children were settled by the

²⁷ Belawu Olomoda (Aged woman, Omoda, Ilorin); Sifau Kadiri (Aged woman, Okelele, Ilorin); Fatmoh Kuranga (Aged woman, Adabata, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, June 16, 2019.

²⁸ Shobalaje Olohunlalaro ((Aged woman, Alore, Ilorin); Rukayatu Jimoh (Aged woman, Okelele, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, March 06, 2024.

senior ones or any woman present. However, if the quarrel became serious, or it was between the grown-up children, the mediation was the duty of the elderly women. Children were taught to relate with respect. As the junior ones honoured the senior ones, so also were the seniors expected to treat juniors with kindness. In cases of disagreements, children were expected to report rather than seek vengeance.²⁹ This social pattern led to orderliness and peaceful cohabitation in the home.

Men's Roles in Family Maintenance and Childcare

In this period, the male gender laid a solid foundation for family welfare, which the female folks complement as described in the earlier sub-sections. The male family members of all categories (grandfather, father, uncle, cousin, brother, son, etc.) of the households in a compound were headed by the (*Magāji*) who was followed, in rank, by the heads of households that constituted (*Awon Bale*). The (*Magāji*) has the final say on any matter concerning the entire family and he or the next most senior male could discipline any erring member of the family regardless of the gender.³⁰ As earlier mentioned, the eldest woman in the family (*Iyalé Agba*) mediates between the females but there used to be referral of nutty cases, particularly among young couples, to the overall head of the family. Thus, men respect women's space and did not usually interfere except on rare cases of dispute.

The individual heads of households (*Awon Bale*) hold forth for the (*Magāji*) in supervising the affairs of the womenfolk and the children. In line with Islamic prescription, which obligates husbands to maintain their families, as heads and maintainer of the family, primordial Ilorin men displayed meticulousness in managing their women and children. They provided physical, psychological, financial, and social supports, which fostered peace, love, and togetherness in family life as well as men's control of the familial. The male gender, like their female counterparts, worked together in this endeavor and in hierarchical order. They did not willfully

²⁹ Belawu Olomoda (Aged woman, Omoda, Ilorin); Sifau Kadiri (Aged woman, Okelele, Ilorin),

³⁰ Musa Aduagba (Aged man, Akodudu, Ilorin); A. I. Jawondo (Professor of History, expert in Ilorin history, University of Ilorin, Ilorin); Khalid Bello Ishola (Islamic scholar and Imam, Kwara State University Teaching Hospital, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, March 10, 2024.

oppress their women. Hence, it is a popular adage among the Ilorin people that 'Ilorin men don't divorce their wives.'³¹

The extended family head (*Magāji*), followed by other in order of seniority, oversaw the welfare of the members. It was when a young man got married that he had a room of his own and his wife was housed in the women's section along with other women. The women's apartment was usually at the back of the house. This was to protect them against any intruder. Primordial Ilorin men's concern for the welfare and safety of women and children was marvelous. They were very attentive, particularly in the night, to ensure that women and children sleep calmly and comfortably; they inspected the doors to ensure that they were properly closed. Indeed, in most cases, they were the last to sleep at night and the first to wake up in the morning. Their attitude to the safety of their family members was such that they were very swift to react to any happening and promptly address various situations, including the cries of babies or unusual movements at night. For different health issues, they had various home remedies or antidotes such as locally made balm (*erọ*) and herbal drinks (i.e. *agbo tutu*, *ap'oro* and *ap'arun*), which were used to treat or suppress the discomforts in women and their children. When occasion demanded, they recited relevant portions of the Qur'an to suppress any frightful happenings.³²

Furthermore, the family head or his designate made provision for the material needs of the family, including food items and other condiments that the womenfolk prepared for its members. Of course, women used to give necessary support, but this was not by compulsion. Thus, the men were caretakers of their wives and, in appreciation of women's strenuous domestic works, especially during the Ramaḍān, they presented new clothes or other gifts items particularly during the (*idul fītr*) festival to mark the end of Ramaḍān fast. They equally rendered both financial and moral supports during other ceremonial events in the wives' families. This was to relieve their wives of the financial burdens usually associated with such ceremonies. It was in view of that, the (*Magāji*)

³¹ Musa Aduagba (Aged man, Akodudu, Ilorin); A. I. Jawondo (Professor of History, expert in Ilorin history, University of Ilorin, Ilorin); ...

³² Musa Aduagba (Aged man, Akodudu, Ilorin); A. I. Jawondo (Professor of History, expert in Ilorin history, University of Ilorin, Ilorin); ³² Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired Principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin); Khadijat Jimoh (Health worker, Gambari, Ilorin); Titilope Ayinla (Businesswoman, Ago Market, Ilorin); Fadhilat Ibrahim (Teacher, Government Girls Day Secondary School, Pakata, Ilorin), etc. interview by author, October 13, 2020.

and other senior men commanded high respect from all and sundry in the family.³³

Intragender Relationships in Modern Ilorin Family Life

The narrative of family life in modern Ilorin has drastically taken a different dimension from the traditional system owing to globalization. This has affected many spheres of the family units, thereby creating new challenges in maintaining cordial intra-gender relationship among the females in the running of affairs in the family. The development is consequent upon a new lifestyle characterized by individualism, self-aggrandizement and parental negligence which have replaced the traditional ethos of collectivism, sacrifice, and care, qualities responsible for family stability during the traditional period. These modern trends are discussed below.

Individualism

Individualism is the tendency to act without recourse to the feelings and needs of others in a relationship. This trait is characteristics of modernist approach to family life, whereby people promote self-goals and desires as a way of attaining self-fulfillment. This is contrary to the traditional concept of collectivism. Modern Ilorin women, as a product of modernism, embraced individualism as a way of life as against collectivism which is countered as outdated and repressive.³⁴ They, due to their social status and the wave of the time, see themselves as better off than other family female members who are not educated. In their bids for independence and non-interference, they minimize their interactions with the extended family relations and hate polygyny with passion. Other family female members, especially mother in-laws and co-wives, are viewed with suspicion and considered usurpers and threats to their desires. They often act discourteously to scare family relations, including co-wives, from their husbands. They are indifferent to relations' feelings and challenges; they live

³³ Musa Aduagba (Aged man, Akodudu, Ilorin); A. I. Jawondo (Professor of History, expert in Ilorin history, University of Ilorin, Ilorin); ...

³⁴ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired School Principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin); Khadijat Jimoh (Health worker, Gambari, Ilorin); Titilope Ayinla (Businesswoman, Ago Market, Ilorin); Fadhilat Ibrahim (Teacher, Government Girls Day Secondary School, Pakata, Ilorin), etc. interview by author, October 13, 2020.

in luxury and abundance, for instance, while their mother in-laws and husbands' siblings are in misery.³⁵

The collaborative support system of the traditional Ilorin women is perceived by some modern women as dubious and with intent of infiltration. Some of these women conceive the 'offering aspects' of the group-collectivism (domestic participation, selflessness, and control system) as intrusive and oppressive; and the 'receiving aspects' (mentoring, admonitions, and assistance) as subjugation and barbaric. Hence, they employ service providers for their domestic needs to nullify the collaborative family supports.³⁶ This development has widened the gap between the family female relationships, since actions beget reactions. The intra-gender rapport among modern Ilorin women, and their counterparts in the country, is characterized by suspicion, hatred, envy, gossips as well as unending bickering and tussles between wives, mother-laws and co-wives among others.³⁷ These happenings hindered their solidarity effort in combating challenges like sickness, barrenness, male abuse, etc.; and in their bid for solutions from outsiders, they become prey to evil-minded men in particular.³⁸

Self-aggrandizement

This is a deliberate behaviour to draw attention to self-importance without recourse to humility and affability preached by religions. More Ilorin women in modern time prosper in their chosen endeavours like their counterparts in other parts of the country. This development is asserted to be responsible for their inadvertent self-aggrandizement. Some of these women forcefully resist any pressure or authority that constitutes obstacles to their

³⁵ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired Principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin); Khadijat Jimoh (Health worker, Gambari, Ilorin); Titilope Ayinla (Businesswoman, Ago Market, Ilorin); Fadhilat Ibrahim (Teacher, Government Girls Day Secondary School, Pakata, Ilorin), etc. interview by author, October 13, 2020; Falilat Obalowu (Retired principal and woman leader, Karuma, Ilorin); Ummulkhayr Jimoh (Retired administrator, Alagbado, Sobi, Ilorin); Alhaja Hawwau Ayinke Obalowu (Businesswoman, Ago Market, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, October 13, 2020.

³⁶ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin) ...

³⁷ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin) ...; Falooe Omiyinka Olutola, "Wife-Mother-in-Law Relationship and Violence among Yoruba Women of Southwestern Nigeria" *American Journal of Sociological Research* 2, no. 2 (2012): 14-16.

³⁸ Respondents unanimously supplied this information and gave instances of how spiritual Alfas or/and herbalists extort modern women or even impregnate them in the name of solving their problems of barrenness and husband's oppression among others.

independence and comfort, even if it is enjoined by Allah. They emphasize their rights rather than their duties and display pride, disrespect, and intolerance to near and far relations.³⁹ This disposition is averred to be one of the major factors responsible for incessant divorce cases and single motherhood syndrome in Ilorin.⁴⁰ Similarly, the development has opened modern women to more temptation and molestation with no genuine sympathisers.⁴¹

Parental Negligence

The quest for socio-economic upliftment has formed a major trend in the globalized world of today, thereby resulting in misplacement of priority. This has greatly affected the womenfolk in Ilorin as it affects their counterpart worldwide. In the attempt to combine domestic and professional duties on the one hand and due to the exigencies of the latter on the other hand, they have inadvertently jettisoned their primary duty of child nurturing. They have resorted to daycare, nanny, or housemaid services to replace their mothering obligations.⁴² Consequentially, the children imbibe the culture of their custodians (who are mostly non-Islamic). Besides, the excessive freedom enjoyed by the children due to their mothers' inactiveness, the unguarded use of ICT gadgets, and none availability of elderly family members to guide them, have contributed immensely to the modern children's lackadaisical attitude towards life and religion, and have made them suck into crimes.⁴³ To correct these anomalies, the old adage of 'only a woman bears the burden of pregnancy, but all numerous people carry the burden of nurturing' should be made functional.

Lessons from Traditional System to Right the Wrongs

The traditional Ilorin women brought into perspective the centrality of women in home making as engendered by Islam. Their

³⁹ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin); Khadijat Jimoh (Health worker, Gambari, Ilorin); Titilope Ayinla (Businesswoman, Ago Market, Ilorin) ...

⁴⁰ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin) ...

⁴¹ Same as reference no. 29.

⁴² Falilat Obalowu (Retired principal and woman leader, Karuma, Ilorin); Bolajoko Ismail (Retired medical officer, Sobi Specialist Hospital Sobi, Ilorin); Aminat Ayinke Hussain (Islamic Scholar, Agbaji, Ilorin); etc. interview by author, October 13, 2020.

⁴³ Sherifat Hussain-Abubakar, "Islamic Mothering: A Prophylaxis for Social Vices in Nigeria," *Kwasu Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 3 no.1, (2019): 42-44.

attitudes and manners were influenced by their high sense of moral cum religious qualities of conscientiousness and God consciousness as mandated by Islam. The lessons that can be drawn from the traditional Ilorin women, particularly for modern females regardless of their backgrounds are:

Solidarity

Modern Ilorin women and other societies alike are characterized by segmentally owing to disaffection created by unfounded hostility among them. Rather than join hands to face the challenges destroying their constituency, they fuel domestic crises through isolation, effrontery, and pettiness. To ameliorate these challenges, solidarity which in the traditional setting, was the bedrock of the women's ability to take control of the home in the traditional Ilorin community should be adopted. All forms of discrimination were non-existent as vividly shown in the warm relationship enjoyed by all. This formed the bedrock of confidence, respect, and followership. The domineering status of contemporary women is another major bane of family and societal integration.⁴⁴ Modern women display individualistic tendencies that disintegrate the home through unnecessary and baseless intra-gender discord occasioned by selfish dispositions and materialistic tendencies. To overcome the disintegration bedeviling the society via family discordance, taking a cue from the Ilorin traditional spirit of unity can form the bedrock of peaceful coexistence among mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and co-wives, etc.

The modern women's individualist and monopolist lifestyle predisposes them to stress and frustration, emanating from overworking and misconduct from those working for them. The traditional Ilorin women's collaborative and support system was imperative for modern women to achieve progress in their endeavor. Their collaboration in the domestic chores did not only lessen their burdens but also strengthened their togetherness. The pretentious disposition of modern women's 'lonely peaceful living,' has destructive effects on the society. Therefore, to avert such, the genuine collaboration of sharing happy and sad moments as practiced in the traditional system of family life, will help reduce the harrowing incidents of loneliness, stress, depression, and overreaction, as it was the case with the traditional Ilorin women.

⁴⁴ Segilola Abdulkadir (Retired principal, Opomalu, Ilorin); Bolanle Musa (Civil servant, Balogun Fulani, Ilorin) ...

The afore-mentioned practice if adopted shall usher in prompt interventions to mitigate physical and emotional pains rampant among modern women.

Healthy Relationship

The healthy intra-gender relationship created by Ilorin traditional women through fraternity is exemplary for women of different holds to emulate. Adapting the team spirit exhibited in the collaborative approach to domestic burden by these traditional women will serve as succour to modern women who are mostly public servants, professionals, and business tycoons. The modern women at times find it difficult to combine domestic and occupational demands.⁴⁵ Similarly, a collective disposition to domestic demands as practiced in the past will obviously lighten the worry over modern women's inability to respond to emergency domestic issues owing to occupational exigencies, because some people are always on a standby to intervene. This truism also displays some of the hidden benefits of Islamic polygyny where co-wives can constitute a supportive strength to each other as was the case with traditional Ilorin women.

There is no doubt that continuous increase in the population of unmarried females (because of males' death owing to uprisings and disasters or increase in female/male birth ratio) constitutes a serious social threat. Yet, the unhealthy interaction between co-wives and unjust treatment from husbands cannot be denied in the modern time.⁴⁶ But polygyny becomes the realistic option to get many of the unmarried women married as asserted in the Islamic scholars' discourse on numerous gains embedded in Islamic polygyny.⁴⁷ To actualize these benefits and surmount unjust treatment by husbands, the fraternity relationship of the traditional Ilorin women can be embraced. This will not only foster intra-gender love but will make it impossible for a husband to use the divide and rule method to exploit them; each of the wives will

⁴⁵ Hadi Muhammad Musa, "Women, Work and Home Management: The Dilemma of a Muslim Working Class Woman," *The Journal of the Islamization of Knowledge and Contemporary Issues*, issue vol. 1, no. 1, January (2010/Safar 1431AH): 106-127.

⁴⁶ Sherifat Hussain-Abubakar, "Islamic Worldview of Justice and Its Reality among Contemporary Muslim Polygyneous Families in Nigeria," in *Contemporary Muslim Women Issues, Challenges and Best Practices*, ed. Nasir, B. M. et al. (Selangor Darul Ehsan: Persatuan Ulama' Malaysia, 2016), 33-36.

⁴⁷ U. A. Hirschfelder and U. Y. Rahman, *From Monogamy to Polygyny: A Way Through* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 2003); A. A. B. Philips, *Polygamy in Islam* (Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, 1998).

stand to defend the other, rather than being used against one another. Each will perceive the other's pains as hers and thus collaborate to fight any form of abuse. Such cooperation will also enable a smooth interaction with in-laws and ameliorate the tension that usually mar modern homes and families.

3. Proper Child Nurturing

It is sacrosanct that the achievement recorded by traditional women in child upbringing and development is a model for modern women. It was founded on the collaborative approach to nurturing, where all categories of women partook and did not discriminate among the children. Their humbleness towards their spouses is equally an attribute to note because children are easily influenced by happenings around them. All these sacrifices, apart from yielding the desired results, earned them rewards from Allah. However, a modern trend where women violently engaged their husbands (in the name of fighting for their rights) in the presence of their children end in awful failure in child rearing. The tension in the home together with the materialistic lifestyle and with no monitoring forces, makes some of these children prey to peer group influences and vices.⁴⁸ The traditional women saw their rights as secondary to their responsibilities, hence their tolerance of the short comings from the husbands all in the bid to bequeath righteousness to the children. This step is necessary for modern women to achieve similar success and avoid turning out children that earn their curses and become the wretched beings in the sight of Allah.

The concerted efforts of the traditional Ilorin women in child nurturing constitute a viable template for modern women in addressing child deviant behaviours and recklessness that characterize youth behaviours in recent time.⁴⁹ Modern women should lead by example through faithfulness to their spouses and inculcating obedience in their children, instead of leaving their affairs in the hands of paid caregivers, who have no stake in the life of the children, so as to save the children from the attributive problems.

⁴⁸ Sherifat Hussain-Abubakar, "Girl-Child Upbringing in Islam: Where Contemporary Ilorin Women are Getting it Wrong," *Ilorin Journal of Religious Studies*, vol. 11, no.2, (2021): 36-39.

⁴⁹ Musa Halima, "Nigeria: Parents and Rising Cases of Social Vices among Youth" 22/4/2016 accessed February 22, 2019, <https://www.dailytrust.com.ng/parents-and-rising-cases-of-social-vices-among-youths.html>.

Conclusion

The foregoing has presented the ways the traditional Ilorin women skilfully maintained peace and order in the home. This fact showed the incontestable centrality of women in the stability of the family and the upright development of progeny. The traditional Ilorin women discharged their marital and motherhood duties with zeal based on piety, patience, endurance, cooperation, generosity, perseverance, and strong family support. This positive attitude culminated into a peaceful and healthy society. Thus, modern women are urged to embrace the practicality of the Islamic etiquettes, as exhibited by the traditional women, in their interactions with other women and in discharging their duties as wives and mothers. This study opines that this template, as old as it may seem, will assist modern women to overcome fears, frustration, and risks that characterize modern style and enhance a better relationship with other women, relations, and colleagues alike, to facilitate cooperation that will make the home a haven for all.