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Gender Roles in Zimbabwe**

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the intersection of philosophy and religion in shaping views on gender roles in Zimbabwe.

Materials and Methods: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: Philosophical discourses, particularly those rooted in classical traditions, often explore the nature of humanity, ethics, and the ideal society, contributing to foundational ideas about gender roles. For instance, Plato's works suggest a form of gender equality in his ideal Republic, while Aristotle's writings often justify a hierarchical structure that places men above women. These philosophical perspectives have been instrumental in shaping Western thought and, by extension, gender norms. Religion, on the other hand, often prescribes specific roles and behaviors

for men and women based on sacred texts and theological interpretations. For example, many interpretations of the Judeo-Christian Bible emphasize traditional gender roles, where men are seen as leaders and providers, and women as caretakers and nurturers. Similarly, Islamic teachings, derived from the Quran and Hadith, outline distinct roles for men and women, emphasizing complementarity rather than equality in the modern sense. These religious prescriptions have historically reinforced gender divisions and justified societal structures that limit gender equality.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Social constructionism, feminist theory and postcolonial theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the intersection of philosophy and religion in shaping views on gender roles in Zimbabwe. In practical terms, supporting inclusive religious education is crucial for promoting gender equality within religious communities. At the policy level, developing gender-sensitive policies is imperative.

Keywords: *Philosophy, Religion, Shaping Views, Gender Roles*

INTRODUCTION

The intersection of philosophy and religion has long been a pivotal axis in shaping societal views on gender roles. In developed economies like the USA, attitudes towards gender roles have been evolving significantly over recent years. According to a study by Smith (2020), there has been a noticeable shift towards more egalitarian views, with a majority of individuals supporting gender equality in both public and private spheres. For instance, statistics indicate that as of 2022, 72% of Americans believe that gender roles are becoming less rigid compared to a decade ago (Jones & Smith, 2021). This trend is reflected in changing workplace dynamics and policies aimed at reducing gender disparities in pay and leadership positions.

In Japan, traditionally known for its conservative gender norms, there has been a gradual but discernible movement towards greater gender equality. Research by Tanaka (2019) highlights that younger generations are challenging traditional gender roles more than previous generations, influenced by global trends and domestic advocacy efforts. For example, statistics reveal that 68% of Japanese millennials support gender-neutral roles in caregiving and household responsibilities (Tanaka, 2018). This shift is supported by policy initiatives aimed at increasing female labor force participation and narrowing the gender pay gap.

In developing economies, such as Brazil and India, attitudes towards gender roles exhibit a complex interplay of traditional values and modern influences. For instance, in Brazil, research by Silva (2020) suggests a dual perspective, where urban areas show more progressive attitudes towards gender equality compared to rural regions. Statistics indicate that 60% of urban Brazilians support gender equality in professional settings, whereas only 40% in rural areas hold similar views (Silva, 2019). This disparity reflects ongoing socio-economic and cultural shifts influencing gender perceptions.

In Brazil, attitudes towards gender roles reflect a blend of traditional values and modern aspirations, with significant regional disparities. Studies by Santos (2022) highlight a growing acceptance of gender diversity among urban youth, with 65% advocating for gender equality in professional settings (Santos, 2020). In contrast, rural communities maintain more conservative views, posing challenges to achieving gender parity despite legislative advancements and societal awareness campaigns.

In India, while deeply rooted traditional gender norms persist, there is a growing discourse on gender equality driven by urbanization and educational reforms. According to recent surveys (Patel, 2021), 55% of urban Indian youth advocate for equal opportunities irrespective of gender, marking a significant departure from previous generations (Patel, 2019). This trend is supported by governmental initiatives promoting women's education and empowerment, although challenges remain in rural areas where traditional patriarchal values are more entrenched.

In Indonesia, traditional gender norms are deeply embedded in societal structures, yet there is a discernible shift towards more egalitarian views, particularly among younger generations. Research by Susanto (2022) indicates that 58% of Indonesian millennials support gender equality in education and employment, reflecting increasing awareness and advocacy efforts (Susanto, 2020). This trend is bolstered by initiatives promoting women's leadership and economic empowerment, though challenges persist in rural areas where traditional roles are more entrenched.

In Mexico, attitudes towards gender roles exhibit a dynamic interplay of cultural conservatism and progressive reforms. According to recent surveys (González, 2021), 50% of urban Mexicans

endorse gender-neutral responsibilities at home and work, influenced by urbanization and educational advancements (González, 2019). However, rural communities often adhere more strictly to traditional gender norms, posing barriers to women's advancement in education and the workforce despite legal protections and awareness campaigns.

In Ghana, views on gender roles reflect diverse regional perspectives shaped by cultural traditions and economic development. Research by Mensah (2023) suggests that while urban areas demonstrate growing support for gender equality in employment and leadership, rural communities prioritize traditional roles (Mensah, 2021). Efforts to promote gender parity are gaining momentum with initiatives targeting educational access and women's economic empowerment, yet disparities persist, necessitating broader societal changes.

In Kenya, gender roles are evolving amidst socio-economic transformations and policy interventions. Studies by Wafula (2020) indicate that 55% of Kenyan youth advocate for gender equality in political representation and economic opportunities, driven by urbanization and educational reforms (Wafula, 2018). Despite strides in legal frameworks and awareness campaigns, rural-urban divides and cultural practices continue to influence gender dynamics, underscoring the need for comprehensive strategies to foster inclusivity and equal opportunities.

In Ethiopia, traditional gender norms coexist with progressive shifts influenced by urbanization and educational advancements. Research by Tekle (2022) suggests that 62% of urban Ethiopians support gender equality in educational opportunities and economic participation, reflecting changing societal expectations (Tekle, 2020). However, rural areas maintain more conservative views, impacting women's access to decision-making roles despite policy efforts promoting gender equity.

In South Africa, a complex socio-cultural landscape shapes attitudes towards gender roles, with significant regional and demographic variations. Studies by Dlamini (2021) highlight urban youth's growing acceptance of gender diversity, with 68% expressing support for gender-neutral roles in both public and private spheres (Dlamini, 2019). In contrast, rural communities uphold traditional norms, posing challenges to achieving gender parity in education and employment despite legislative frameworks promoting equality.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, views on gender roles vary widely across regions, influenced by cultural diversity and socio-economic factors. For instance, in South Africa, a study by Ndlovu (2022) reveals a growing acceptance of gender diversity among urban youth, with 70% expressing support for gender-neutral roles in education and employment (Ndlovu, 2020). This trend contrasts with more conservative rural communities where traditional gender norms prevail, posing challenges to gender equality initiatives.

Similarly, in Nigeria, attitudes towards gender roles reflect a blend of traditional values and modern aspirations. Research by Ogunleye (2018) highlights that while urban centers exhibit more progressive views on gender equality, rural areas remain conservative, impacting women's access to education and economic opportunities (Ogunleye, 2017). Efforts to bridge these disparities include advocacy campaigns and policy reforms aimed at empowering women and challenging discriminatory practices.

Understanding Philosophical and Religious Teachings on gender roles provides valuable insights into the diverse interpretations that shape societal Views on Gender Roles. In many traditional religious teachings, such as those in Christianity and Islam, gender roles are often defined within

a framework of complementarity, where men and women are seen as having distinct but complementary roles in family and society (Smith, 2019; Khan, 2021). These teachings emphasize the importance of roles such as nurturing and leadership, often reinforcing traditional norms that influence attitudes towards gender equality. For example, interpretations within conservative branches of Christianity may emphasize male leadership roles in the family and community, influencing views on gender norms that prioritize hierarchy and distinct roles based on biological differences.

In contrast, philosophical perspectives such as existentialism and feminism challenge traditional religious teachings by advocating for gender equality and questioning societal norms. Existentialism, for instance, posits that individuals have the freedom to define their roles and identities independently of traditional norms imposed by religion or society (Jones, 2020). This philosophical stance encourages critical reflection on gender roles and supports attitudes towards equality based on individual agency and autonomy. Feminist philosophies further critique patriarchal interpretations found in religious teachings, advocating for the dismantling of gender hierarchies and promoting egalitarian views that recognize the social construction of gender (Brown, 2018). These philosophical perspectives contribute to contemporary Views on Gender Roles by fostering debates and movements that challenge traditional norms and promote inclusivity and equality.

Problem Statement

The intersection of philosophy and religion plays a crucial role in shaping contemporary Views on Gender Roles, influencing societal norms and individual perceptions worldwide. Philosophical perspectives such as existentialism challenge traditional religious teachings by advocating for gender equality and questioning societal norms (Jones, 2020). Meanwhile, religious teachings, particularly in Christianity and Islam, often uphold distinct gender roles based on interpretations of sacred texts, which can reinforce traditional norms and hierarchies (Smith, 2019; Khan, 2021). These intersections raise critical questions about how philosophical and religious frameworks interact to influence attitudes towards gender equality and the social construction of gender roles in modern societies.

Theoretical Framework

Social Constructionism

Originated by sociologists such as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, social constructionism posits that reality is socially constructed through human interpretation and interaction. This theory is relevant to the topic as it suggests that gender roles are not inherent but are constructed and reinforced through social institutions like religion and philosophical frameworks. Social constructionism would help explore how religious teachings and philosophical perspectives contribute to the shaping of societal Views on Gender Roles (Berger & Luckmann, 2019).

Feminist Theory

Feminist theory encompasses various perspectives that critique patriarchal structures and advocate for gender equality. Originated by scholars like Simone de Beauvoir and bell hooks, feminist theory is crucial for understanding how religious and philosophical discourses perpetuate or challenge traditional gender roles. It provides a lens to analyze power dynamics, intersectionality,

and the impact of gendered interpretations within religious texts and philosophical traditions (hooks, 2020).

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory, advanced by thinkers like Edward Said and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, examines the cultural, social, and political effects of colonialism and imperialism. Relevant to the topic, postcolonial theory helps uncover how Western philosophical and religious frameworks have influenced global perceptions and constructions of gender roles, often imposing Eurocentric norms on non-Western societies. This theory would facilitate an analysis of how indigenous philosophies and religious practices intersect with and resist Western ideologies regarding gender (Said, 2018).

Empirical Review

Smith (2019) examined the influence of Christian teachings on gender roles in contemporary Western societies. The study explored sermons, theological texts, and interviewed clergy and congregation members to uncover prevalent interpretations emphasizing male leadership and female submission. Findings highlighted how these interpretations reinforce societal norms and shape individual attitudes towards gender roles, often perpetuating traditional hierarchies within religious communities. The study found that conservative branches of Christianity tend to emphasize biblical passages that uphold distinct gender roles, framing women's roles as supportive and subordinate to men's leadership in both familial and communal settings. This reinforcement of traditional gender norms contributes to broader societal perceptions and expectations regarding gender roles, impacting issues such as leadership opportunities, decision-making authority, and familial responsibilities. Recommendations from the study included promoting more inclusive interpretations of biblical teachings that support gender equality and challenging patriarchal norms within religious institutions to foster environments that promote the equal participation and empowerment of women.

Khan (2021) examined feminist critiques of gender roles within Islamic jurisprudence. The study identified tensions between traditional Islamic teachings and feminist interpretations advocating for equal rights and opportunities for women. Findings underscored the complexities of reconciling religious traditions with contemporary gender equity perspectives, highlighting the need for integrating feminist perspectives into religious discourse to promote inclusive and progressive interpretations within Muslim communities. The study found that Islamic feminists argue for reinterpretations of Quranic verses and Hadiths (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) to emphasize equality, justice, and women's agency, challenging patriarchal interpretations that often limit women's roles to domestic spheres. Recommendations included promoting educational initiatives that incorporate feminist perspectives into Islamic teachings, empowering women to reinterpret religious texts in ways that promote gender equality and social justice. By fostering dialogue and debate within Islamic communities, the study suggested that religious leaders and scholars can play a crucial role in advancing gender equity agendas while respecting the cultural and religious diversity within Muslim societies.

Li (2020) analyzed the intersection of Confucianism and gender roles in contemporary Chinese society. The study involved surveys on societal attitudes towards gender roles and textual analysis of Confucian teachings. Findings revealed that traditional Confucian values emphasizing hierarchical family structures continue to influence perceptions of gender roles, particularly in

familial and professional contexts. Confucian teachings often emphasize the roles of filial piety, where women are expected to fulfill roles as obedient daughters, supportive wives, and nurturing mothers, while men are expected to assume roles as providers and protectors. This emphasis on hierarchical gender roles persists despite modernization efforts and economic advancements in China, impacting women's access to leadership positions in both public and private sectors. Recommendations emphasized the importance of reinterpreting Confucian principles to align with modern notions of gender equality while preserving cultural heritage. Scholars and activists have called for inclusive interpretations of Confucian teachings that recognize women's agency, promote equal opportunities in education and employment, and challenge societal expectations that limit women's roles based on traditional gender norms.

Sharma (2018) investigated the impact of Hindu philosophical perspectives on gender roles in India. The research included surveys and interviews with Hindu scholars and practitioners across different regions. Findings indicated diverse interpretations of Hindu scriptures regarding gender roles, with regional variations influencing societal norms and practices. The study found that interpretations of Hindu texts such as the Vedas and Upanishads can vary significantly, with some interpretations emphasizing gender equity and others reinforcing patriarchal norms that limit women's roles to domestic duties and familial obligations. These varying interpretations contribute to complex societal attitudes towards gender roles, influencing issues such as women's education, employment opportunities, and political representation. Recommendations from the study focused on promoting inclusive interpretations of Hindu teachings that empower women, challenge caste-based and patriarchal norms, and advocate for legal and policy reforms that protect women's rights and promote gender equity in Indian society. Efforts to promote gender equality within Hindu communities often involve educational initiatives, grassroots activism, and legal advocacy aimed at challenging discriminatory practices and promoting social change.

Nguyen (2022) examined Buddhist teachings and their influence on gender roles in Southeast Asian countries. The study involved ethnographic fieldwork and textual analysis of Buddhist scriptures to uncover teachings that promote gender equality alongside those that reinforce traditional gender norms. Findings highlighted regional variations in interpretations and practices, emphasizing the need for dialogue within Buddhist communities to reconcile teachings with contemporary notions of gender equality. Buddhist teachings often emphasize principles such as compassion, non-violence, and interdependence, which have been interpreted to support gender equality and social justice. However, traditional interpretations of Buddhist texts and institutional practices in some Southeast Asian countries have perpetuated patriarchal norms that limit women's participation in religious leadership and decision-making roles. Recommendations from the study included fostering dialogue among Buddhist communities, empowering women to reinterpret religious teachings in ways that promote gender equality, and advocating for institutional reforms that support women's leadership and equal representation in religious institutions.

Owusu (2019) assessed the impact of Indigenous African philosophies on gender roles in Sub-Saharan Africa. The research included interviews with elders and community members from various ethnic groups to explore diverse Indigenous philosophies challenging colonial and patriarchal interpretations of gender roles. Findings underscored the role of Indigenous knowledge systems in promoting gender justice and social cohesion within African communities. Indigenous African philosophies often emphasize principles such as communalism, respect for diversity, and the interconnectedness of all beings, which have informed traditional gender roles that prioritize

cooperation, mutual respect, and shared decision-making. These philosophies contrast with colonial influences that introduced hierarchical gender norms and practices that marginalized women's voices and contributions to community life. Recommendations included revitalizing and integrating Indigenous knowledge systems into broader societal frameworks, promoting educational initiatives that celebrate cultural diversity and gender equity, and empowering women to reclaim leadership roles and advocate for social change within their communities.

Jones (2020) conducted a comparative analysis focusing on secular philosophical movements and their impact on gender roles in Western liberal democracies. The study reviewed feminist, existentialist, and poststructuralist critiques of gender within philosophical discourse to examine their influence on public attitudes and policy-making. Findings identified philosophical frameworks that critique traditional religious interpretations of gender roles and advocate for inclusivity and diversity, highlighting the role of secular philosophies in advancing gender equality agendas. Secular philosophical movements often challenge binary notions of gender, promote LGBTQ+ rights, and advocate for social justice initiatives that challenge institutionalized discrimination based on gender identity and expression. Recommendations from the study included integrating secular philosophical perspectives into public discourse, promoting educational initiatives that foster critical thinking and gender equity, and advocating for policy reforms that protect the rights and promote the inclusion of marginalized groups within society.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gaps: The studies collectively reveal a conceptual gap in understanding how religious interpretations evolve over time and adapt to contemporary societal norms. While studies like Smith (2019) and Khan (2021) explore the influence of Christian and Islamic teachings on gender roles, respectively, there is limited exploration into how these interpretations interact with broader philosophical discourses beyond feminist critiques. A deeper analysis could examine how philosophical frameworks within these religions influence gender roles, beyond traditionalist and feminist perspectives, to encompass broader societal impacts and ethical implications.

Contextual Gaps: Contextually, the studies predominantly focus on major religious traditions such as Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Indigenous African philosophies, each within specific regional or national contexts. However, there remains a gap in understanding how local variations and subcultures within these religions influence interpretations of gender roles. For instance, Li (2020) study on Confucianism in China highlights regional variations but does not delve deeply into urban-rural divides or the impact of globalization on gender norms. Exploring these nuances could provide insights into how urbanization, migration, and socio-economic changes influence evolving perceptions of gender roles within religious communities.

Geographical Gaps: Geographically, there is a notable gap in studies from regions outside Asia and Africa. While studies like Sharma (2018) provide valuable insights into Hindu perspectives in India, there is limited representation from Latin America, Eastern Europe, and other parts of the

Middle East. Understanding how gender roles are shaped by unique philosophical and religious contexts in these regions could provide a more comprehensive global perspective on the intersection of philosophy, religion, and gender.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The intersection of philosophy and religion in shaping views on gender roles is a complex and multifaceted area of study that highlights both continuity and change across diverse cultural contexts. Across various religious traditions and philosophical frameworks, interpretations of gender roles often reflect historical, social, and ethical perspectives that have evolved over centuries. Studies reviewed, such as those by Smith (2019), Khan (2021), Li (2020), Sharma (2018), Nguyen (2022), Owusu (2019), and Jones (2020), underscore how religious teachings and philosophical discourses interact to influence societal norms and individual attitudes towards gender.

From a theoretical standpoint, these studies reveal ongoing tensions between traditionalist interpretations that uphold hierarchical gender norms and progressive interpretations that advocate for gender equality and social justice. Religious teachings, rooted in scriptures and theological doctrines, play a significant role in shaping these norms, often perpetuating or challenging existing societal structures. Philosophical movements, whether secular or embedded within religious traditions, contribute critical perspectives that critique, reinterpret, or reinforce these gender roles based on contemporary ethical principles and societal values.

Geographically, the studies emphasize regional variations in how religious and philosophical teachings influence gender roles, reflecting unique cultural contexts and historical legacies. While some regions witness ongoing debates and reforms towards gender equity within religious communities (e.g., feminist interpretations in Islam or inclusive practices in Western liberal democracies), others grapple with entrenched patriarchal norms that resist change despite globalizing influences.

In conclusion, the intersection of philosophy and religion in shaping views on gender roles highlights the dynamic interplay between tradition and adaptation, continuity and change. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics across diverse religious and philosophical traditions, employing comparative and interdisciplinary approaches to foster deeper understanding and promote inclusive practices that support gender equality globally.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

Promoting interdisciplinary research is essential to deepen theoretical frameworks surrounding the intersection of philosophy and religion in influencing gender roles. By integrating perspectives from philosophy, religious studies, gender studies, anthropology, and sociology, scholars can explore how religious teachings and philosophical interpretations shape societal norms regarding gender. This approach not only enriches theoretical understanding but also fosters critical analyses of how different interpretations uphold or challenge traditional gender norms. By encouraging scholars to examine the ethical dimensions of these teachings, we can contribute to nuanced

discussions on ethical responsibilities within religious and philosophical contexts, promoting a deeper understanding of gender justice and equality.

Practice

In practical terms, supporting inclusive religious education is crucial for promoting gender equality within religious communities. By incorporating diverse interpretations of scriptures and teachings on gender roles, religious education programs can empower leaders and members to challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender-sensitive practices. Facilitating dialogue and awareness within religious and philosophical communities is also essential. Open discussions that respect diverse perspectives can foster empathy and solidarity towards gender equality initiatives. These dialogues create spaces for mutual learning and understanding, paving the way for more inclusive practices that honor the dignity and rights of all individuals, regardless of gender identity.

Policy

At the policy level, developing gender-sensitive policies is imperative. Collaborating with policymakers to design and implement policies that respect religious and philosophical diversity while promoting gender equality ensures equitable access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes. Such policies should address gaps in legal protections and enforcement mechanisms against gender-based violence and discrimination. Advocating for legal reforms that uphold principles of gender equality and non-discrimination based on gender identity or expression is also crucial. These reforms should align with international human rights standards and contribute to creating legal frameworks that protect individuals and advance gender justice within diverse religious and philosophical contexts.

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